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Boston, June, 1845.

THE
BOW IN THE CLOUD:
FIFTEEN DISCOURSES.

~~~~~  
By **GEORGE WARE BRIGGS,**  
Junior Minister of the First Church in Plymouth, Mass.  
~~~~~

" Behold the rainbow's form,
Hung on the brow of heaven !
The glory of the passing storm,
The pledge of mercy given."

~~~~~  
**BOSTON:**  
**PUBLISHED BY JOSEPH DOWE.**  
**1846.**



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TO  
REV. JAMES KENDALL, D. D.  
SENIOR MINISTER OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN PLYMOUTH,  
THESE DISCOURSES  
ARE AFFECTIONATELY INCRIBED  
AS A MEMORIAL  
OF A CONNECTION OF UNBROKEN HARMONY,  
DURING  
EIGHT YEARS OF AN ASSOCIATED MINISTRY.



## PREFACE.

It is with unfeigned diffidence that these Discourses are presented to the public eye. Most of them were suggested by special incidents in the course of a ministry, which, though comparatively brief, has been called to notice the departure of many most valued friends. The only carefulness in their composition in the first place, consisted in a simple endeavor to bring the precise point of each discourse distinctly before the mind, leaving all particular expressions to assume the form the moment might suggest. And in revising them for publication, the author has feared to correct them severely in this respect. He feared greatly to change the spontaneous expression of the feeling of the hour, in any endeavors to give greater correctness of style.

It is the author's hope, that the views here presented, may commend themselves to believing minds, as a true though humble exposition of the bright Christian faith. He believes it a duty to connect the most cheering thoughts, with all these various and dreaded experiences of change. He does not think so, through any forgetfulness of the bitterness of the trial often visiting human hearts. His own repeated ex-

perience must forever prevent any such forgetfulness. Indeed his feeling is, that precisely because the trial is so deep, it may become a ministry to introduce noblest thoughts, and most living affections. Only a profound experience can move the deepest things in the soul. "Blessed are they that mourn." And it is a most grateful office to trace some of these bright and beautiful results, as they unfold themselves in any deep experience in life. The Bow is spanning every cloud. Let us always lift our eyes to rejoice in that Sign of Promise.

Of course there cannot be any precise connection of thought between discourses prepared at long intervals, and for entirely disconnected occasions. Yet the author has endeavored to arrange them, as far as possible, in a natural order; commencing with "Gethsemane," and closing with the "Peace of God." Doubtless too, repetitions of the same idea may frequently occur, in a series of Sermons, all written with the same general design. Still the author hopes that each discourse may be found a discussion of a distinct and peculiar view. If these simple endeavors to unfold truths so precious, may be an instrument to inspire brighter or purer faith, the author's chief design will be fully attained.

PLYMOUTH, MASS., DECEMBER, 1845.



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## THE BOW IN THE CLOUD.

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### Gethsemane.

**MATT. xxvi: 38, 46.** "Then saith he unto them, my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here and watch with me."

"Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me."

It may be presumptuous, confidently to present any interpretation of the Saviour's agony, when so many believers have deemed it difficult of explanation. And yet, no scene in his history is more replete with rich instruction. None can reveal more clearly one most attractive feature of the Christian spirit. The heart instinctively shrinks indeed at first, from any attempt to develope its teaching. But the hesitation is not in consequence of the conflicting interpretations various believers have advanced. We shrink from any attempt to analyze such intense emotion. All speech must be miserably shallow, when the feeling is so unfathomably deep. It appears more appropriate to go to the garden with no criticising words; with nought of human speech; but only with silent, adoring sympathy and reverence.

While we watch with the Redeemer the tongue is hushed, as when we stand before the truly grand, the sublimely beautiful in nature. Before the great things of God's power, and the deep things in the human heart, the first impulse is to be still.

In the disconnected verses we have selected, Jesus is presented to our view in two successive scenes. We hear his cry of anguish in the hour of agony. We hear his calm word as he met the betrayer. We join these two scenes together, because the connection between them in the natural tendency of feeling is most impressive, and because we wish those who are perplexed by the agony, to remember in the first place the sublime peace instantly succeeding it. Mark the contrast in these two successive hours. One is all anguish. The other is all serenity. In one the human heart is rent. In the other he meets the traitor with a calm remonstrance, as if no agony had been. Just now great drops of blood were wrung out upon his forehead by the intensity of his emotion. And here, no trace of all that suffering remains upon his brow. The agonized man is transfigured by a superhuman serenity. The angel descending to strengthen him remains in his heart. And when he utters the simple words, "I am he," even the rude soldiery fell backward, overpowered, awed for the moment, by the majestic calmness of his presence. What-

ever the agony might have been, it had departed then. If it *were* a transient eclipse, the darkness remained but a moment. Perhaps it had unsealed the deeper fountains of strength. In the pains of humanity, the godlike may have been fully born, as by the snapping of the bonds of earthly life, the spirit soars.

But what was this agony? Gethsemane! What was there? And here it is necessary to detain ourselves a little in the less attractive work of exposition, before we pass to the view this scene suggests concerning the character of Jesus. For upon that exposition is based in some degree, the thought which appears so rich in instruction, and so full of attractions for the heart.

Three things were combined perhaps, in that deep emotion in the trial-hour of Jesus. There was in the first place, the trial of all nobler human feeling. We do not shrink from the supposition that this was experienced. The heart of Jesus overflowed with human sympathies. His relation to John, to Mary and Martha and Lazarus, his tears at the tomb, the last word to his mother when standing near the cross, all show how everything of human sympathy was intensely felt. And when we look at this scene in connection with what preceded it, we know that every sensibility must have been moved to its keenest action. Everything to move the heart had been experienced in the last few days. The



first notice of this last journey to Jerusalem reveals the deep feeling of his heart. It is said the disciples "were afraid" as they followed. He knew he was going directly to the cross. And the sublime devotion of his soul covered his whole form, and his every feature, with a calm, divine majesty, the wondering disciples could only behold with a trembling reverence and awe. Observe his answer too, when his feet were anointed; indicating a state of mind absorbed with one mighty thought, to which the fragrance of the ointment could only speak of his embalming. Still more, there were the feelings awakened by his apparently triumphant entrance into Jerusalem; where the nature of the popular enthusiasm, based upon a false view of his character directly to be dispelled, only *proved* how readily they would join in the cry for his crucifixion. And farther still, he had just risen from the last supper, with its interchange of deep affection, where the whole heart had poured itself out in such unspeakable fervor and sweetness. Every possible element of excitement was there, moving the heart by its utmost power. The poor disciples were exhausted by this mighty strain of feeling, and could only sleep. And this accounts for that circumstance, apparently so strange. But into what an unspeakable, immortal wakefulness the soul of Jesus must have been brought, by all those mighty influences concentrated upon that single hour?

And could another element be added to the cup already full? There was the loneliness in respect to human sympathy. His chosen friends were slumbering. How impressively this circumstance declared the fact, that the whole world was sleeping over everything which waked him to agony! And as some have intimated, might not the night also, which makes loneliness seem more lonely, which symbolizes so solemnly the fact that no light of this world's sympathy beams over the heart, might not this have added its element of shade? Gather these things into one view, and if there were a human heart in the Redeemer's breast, we wonder not its deeps were broken up.

But another train of emotion was present then. There was the trial of patriotic feeling; the remembrance of the woe impending to his country. The tears falling over Jerusalem as he entered it with Hosannas, declare how this was recognized. It appears in the reply to the wailing women as he went to the cross, telling them not to weep for him, but for themselves, and their children. This was no light and trivial sadness. Jesus was patriotic, as well as divinely philanthropic. The heart that bled for the Samaritan as for the Jew, could still feel an *added* pang when it beheld this Jewish blindness, the woe awaiting his kinsmen in the flesh. And he saw it all. In the fierceness of their feeling, he saw the spirit that

must arm itself against the Roman, and provoke his desolating vengeance. Was not that one element in his agony? Was not that one impulse to the prayer for the cup to pass from his lips? Could a crucifixion with malefactors deliver his countrymen, it would be an ineffable joy! But each step in their attempts for his destruction, really strengthened the spirit which sealed their doom. And as he looked down through the ages, the dread fulfilment of their self-uttered curse, "His blood be upon ourselves and our children," arose in more awful distinctness every moment before his pained and bleeding heart.

One other element remains, nobler many may say, keener perhaps, than all beside. His was a "*Saviour's* woe." Grief for the sin that made him suffer, was the deepest suffering of all. The piercing arrow entered the heart, when it remembered the blindness that did not hear the calls of one seeking to gather all beneath its gentle wings, until they were hidden from the eyes, and the ministry of judgment became the only possible ministry of mercy. Sorrow for the sin! That prompted the awful exclamation at a previous time concerning the treachery of the betrayer, which comes to me as a cry of anguish; "It had been good for that man, if he had never been born." And that, as he meditated the blindness of previous time forever stoning its prophets, as he saw the blindness of the hour which was ready

to crucify its Redeemer, as he saw the like sin in generations yet to come, *that* wrung out the bloody sweat, and the cry of agony. My Saviour bled for man before he hung upon the tree ! In the loneliness of Gethsemane, grief for human sin burdened most heavily his soul of redeeming love. And when he went to the cross itself, other aspects of the great sacrifice perhaps appeared, visions of the redemption it would bring, to change the torturing agony into an abiding peace.

And now it may be said, "Possibly these were some of the elements entering into the Redeemer's agony ! Yet why should any agony have been ?" And then, men speak of a thousand martyr-souls who have appeared more firm, and wonder how the seeming weakness can be explained away. The question implies a great misapprehension of the nature of the true Christian feeling. And a general principle breaks into view in its consideration, applicable to many things, as well as to the incident we are contemplating.

An impression seems to vitiate much of the world's thought, that Christianity not only regulates, but in some degree restrains, and represses natural sympathies. It is not to *control* them simply. It does something to eradicate. Some imagine it aids us in trial-days, partly by telling us not to cling so closely at any time in love to those around us. It is to save from disappointed friendships, partly by lifting us above earthly

friendships into a kind of impersonal affection, which knows no glow, and can feel no pang. Men have not always perceived how its philanthropy, so pure from respect of persons, can consist with these particular affections. Hence, some objectors, and one-sided defenders also, have been led to say, Christianity condemned all patriotism in its universal aims. Hence many kindred fancies, which in their mistaken reverence, veiled from view one of the chief charms of the Redeemer's soul.

It is all misapprehension we are sure. Christianity does not repress, but intensates, and glorifies humanity. It never closes, but only widens and deepens immeasurably, the channels of all worthy human feelings. It fires, not extinguishes, the strictly human heart. It makes every blessed sympathy inexpressibly more mighty. It sends the divine strength it infuses into the heart throughout the frame, into every throbbing of its pulses. It imparts even to the eye of parental love, a deeper expression, giving to what is sometimes earthly, an immortal thought and an immortal power. And the mere civilities of ordinary life, often so hollow, it transforms into the overflowings of a vital love; imparting a depth to them all scarcely dreamed by a heart not thus awakened. Ah! the life of which it may be said, "It is God dwelling in the flesh," endows the earthly sympathies with a godlike en-



ergy. The true Christian is all nerve. He is all heart. A more than feminine tenderness entwines itself around his manly strength, his own steadfastness. No stoicism dwells in his spirit. He does not stand like a bare, sturdy pillar, severe and firm. The column is covered from base to summit, with the gentlest tendrils of feeling. When they first meet the eye, you may not perceive their firm support. We might imagine a breath would make them shrink and quiver. Yet when they all are torn and rent away, it only discloses the hidden column standing immovably forever. So standeth the Christian heart, when the sympathies some imagine can but weaken it, are rent away and crucified. Christianity is human as well as divine. The depths of its humanity indeed is proportionate to the majesty of its divinity. It *incarnates* the life of God. It never sustains by crushing affection. It brings angels rather to succour us in our agony. It is not in any low application to external things alone the wisdom of the apostle's declaration is really seen, "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It is verified even in outward things, so universal and all-beneficent is the work of the religious life. But it is in this deepening of every purer feeling pertaining to present being; in this gift of new strength to sympathy, of new power to love; in this glorifying

of all bright affections by the outpouring of divine strength upon the human heart, in these things the great idea of the apostle's word is revealed, when the countenance is not only eloquent with the glow of human feeling, but radiant, through an inspiration from above, the apostolic word is fulfilled. The life of fervor perfected in the world to come, travels over the path of present existence, transfiguring humanity everywhere. And hath it not the promise then of the life which now is ?

And therefore, the sacrifices the Christian heart may offer, cannot be what some have imagined in their speculations. Many have compared this incident in the history of Jesus with a philosophic stoicism, and questioned, and wondered. Stoicism is grand when it stands up in its own firmness. But it scarcely hath a heart; and it is a barbarian grandeur after all. We can admire nothing that is built upon the ruins of what is tenderest and sweetest in the human breast. The stern resolve of the savage heart is not half so majestic, as the weeping, yet true consecration of the refined and sensitive spirit. Men compare this incident in the life of Jesus, with the sacrifices of enthusiastic souls. Enthusiasm in its fervency is grand. But in its wildness and its heat, it sometimes forgets the heart whose beatings it may have felt. It is a kind of insane greatness it displays. It forgets or overlooks the actual facts

of the life. Make no such poor comparisons. Christianity hath nothing to do with any sacrifice like that of barbarism, or wild enthusiasm. It brings an offering in a devotion unspeakably more beautiful than these. It is as much more beautiful, as a truly angelic heart, whose thousand strings of feeling, attuned to sweetest harmony, are making melody at every touch, is more charming than stoicism in its ice. It comes in a devotion as much more grand, as the expression of a cultivated, almost inspired reason, is nobler than the wild grandeur of any possible degree of enthusiasm.

Do we still ask why this agony of Jesus should have been? Do we wonder still? It is in precise accordance with his character. It grew from that special intensity a deeper life like his imparts to the human heart. It was one consequence of the developement of all affection, and all sympathy in his breast. Why call it any strange thing in the history of such a being? Why come in amazement to the garden, as if some inexplicable departure from the usual spirit of Jesus must be witnessed there? We stand amazed and wondering indeed, when we see the divine depth of his feeling. The same mystery rests upon this portion of the Redeemer's life, which covers all his history to our half-seeing, half-apprehending souls. But there is no mystery in respect to the *nature* of the feeling whence

the agony came. And do not go to observe his trial, as if any imperfection were there. Do not go tremblingly, questioning whether the Saviour's character may be vindicated in this particular. Not from the imperfection, but from the perfectness of his being, that suffering came. Only a being whose heart was intensely loving, whose sensibilities had such a miraculous strength and fervor, whose humanity was endowed with such a godlike energy, could have suffered thus. It was the infinitude of his love that made the pang of its trial so keen. Ye scarcely living hearts, who comprehend not what it is to love, to whom the depths of the Redeemer's sympathy hath never been unfolded, who are not glorious enough to be capable of such agony, do not come to the garden with your poor criticisms. How can you understand the pains the heart of the Son of God might feel? Could we imagine them speculating concerning the sorrows sometimes wringing human hearts, almost as well might the lower tribes of being wonder at the pains of which man alone is capable, and question his greatness, because he stood not unmoved like themselves. Because Jesus was so great, the agony came. Instead of its suggesting any questioning in our thought, Gethsemane seems to place the crown upon his brow. That agony makes his sacrifice glorious. There was no stoicism. How immeasurably was it removed from

that? There was no enthusiasm. All things were seen, just as they were. He was not borne onward by any human sympathy, as have been even the martyrs of the world, almost everywhere; by the sympathy of the few at least, whose approving voices were more to them than all the world beside. Jesus was alone. It was a sacrifice when every nerve was alive and bleeding. The ideal many appear to cherish in this particular does not seem to me most exalted. To adore while we bleed. That is glorious. To wear the crown of thorns, feeling its every cruel point and yet retain a radiant brow; to ascend the hill of sacrifice, chanting praises in the heart to the Father's Providence, when every breath of praise is a dirge to every selfish thought. That is the enrobing of the human heart with a divine majesty.

Gethsemane dwells in our memory therefore, as a clear testimony to the depth of the Redeemer's heart; as a bright manifestation of a most attractive feature of the Christian life. And surely it must be remembered as abounding in instructions of unspeakable consequence to the human soul. He would be no example for humanity, in whose history no Gethsemane had been. Some do not love that statement, we know. Yet who hath not at some period met a similar experience? We are made both for smiles, and tears. And though the smile may come most frequently, tears must sometimes be gushing out. The heart cannot be

attuned to the rapturous joys sometimes visiting us, without a liability to sorrows as keen. What is thus alive to gladness, must be equally alive to grief. God's angels are various in their ministries. Some come on the bounding feet of joy. Some with the veiled face of sadness. Providence, nature, symbolize this great fact. Nature hath its sunshine, and its clouds; its brightness, and its storms. But from the clouds come its refreshments too. They drop down the dews, and life repeats what these analogies suggest. Humanity must have its countenance channelled by tears, as well as wreathed in smiles. There are springs of feeling nothing beside appears to open. There are energies not otherwise developed. Have you never felt that, when you heard the word of one who had suffered indeed? Did not the words appear to come from a deeper humanity than any know, who only laugh on the surface of life? Did they not move a chord in the heart *beneath* what other words could touch? Have you never begun thus to perceive something of the profound meaning in the words of Jesus, "Blessed are they that mourn?" Blessed *are* they, in his word; not in future consolation only, but in a present enlarged, and redoubled being.

What does humanity need among its teachings, but the lesson of Gethsemane? It looks for eyes that know also how to weep. It clings to the soul that can teach it to triumph through the suf-

fering. When it looks into that evening-stillness resting upon Olivet's mountain, broken only by the prayer of agony and trust, it knows that all these depths of trial have once been fully sounded. A perfect Redeemer is there to be found. Another proof of the complete Messiahship of Jesus is there to be seen. Another proof appears that he can meet us in every varied hour of experience, in every beating of the heart, between the moment of veriest agony, and the prayer of heavenly peace. Joy to the world for this incident in his history as for everything beside in his glorious revelations. Gethsemane, how needful, and how blessed !

## Jesus refusing the Wine and Myrrh.

---

MARK xv : 23. "They gave him to drink, wine mingled with myrrh : But he received it not."

WE are told it was customary to administer a stupefying draught, to those who were suffering the agony of crucifixion. So terrible was that form of punishment, that men who could inflict it, were still melted into compassion by its excruciating tortures. Cruelty itself shudders at the thought of such intolerable pains, and endeavored to give a partial relief. And although the cruel populace and the unfeeling priests mocked and reviled the uncomplaining sufferer, as if they sought to make *crucifixion* more excruciating, yet some compassionate souls were moved to pity. Perhaps some heathen soldier was touched by a tenderness the Jew could not feel, and offered this alleviating draught to Jesus. But he received it not.

He received it not. Last night, the meek sufferer prayed in Gethsemane, that if it were possible, the cup might pass from him. Last night, he prayed in an agony so intense, that "he sweat as it were great drops of blood." And now, upon



the cross itself, in the bitterness of its torture, could he refuse any alleviation of its pains? The incident recorded in the text has a new significance from its close connection with that hour of agony. We follow Jesus to the garden to hear him exclaim, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Three times he fell upon the ground in the intensest pleading of his soul in prayer. Again, and yet again, he turns to the three disciples, asking them to watch with him a single hour. He seems to call upon both heaven and earth for sympathy and strength. His spirit appears to faint in the moment of its extremest need. We almost begin to fear the trial of the morrow may not be bravely met. Yet when the morrow comes, he refuses "the wine and the myrrh." Last night, his soul appeared like the agitated sea, when the sun goes down amidst tumult and storm. Now all is serene, as when the morning sun smiles again upon the calmed and placid wave. The heavens could not look down more peacefully upon Jerusalem in that hour, than the soul of Jesus looked upon the instrument of his torture. Nay, as the Record tells us, nature seemed to sympathize with that cruel sacrifice, and veiled her face in gloom. Jesus refused the wine and the myrrh. The text borrows significance we say, in connection with the dark scene preceding it. It was neither apathy of spirit, nor a vehement enthusiasm, rendered in-

sensible to the keenness of the trial, which refused all alleviation of its pains, as the agony proves. Each distinct and separate pain, either from suffering of body or scorn of foes, or desertion of friends, or a diviner grief weeping over the blindness of the people which would not permit them to be saved, he clearly saw, and keenly felt. Each separate pulse of agony he knew; yet with the deepest consciousness of all, he stood with the serenity of a God.

The incident in the text thus regarded, like every particular and minutest thing in the Redeemer's life, is connected with the sublimest principle. For each single word or look of Jesus, is like each single ray of light falling upon your path in blessing. Follow it back to its source, and it leads you to a glory almost too bright for mortal eyes steadily to behold. Let us observe, therefore, the teaching of the text in its application to habitual life, and endeavor to form some conception of the spirit it indicates and reveals.

Jesus stood by the cross, or hung upon its cruel nails with a sensibility to the trials of the scene deeper than our imagination conceives. Yet he refused the wine and the myrrh. Man shrinks from bearing the full weight of any cross Providence may place upon his shoulder. Jesus serenely meets and overcomes its extremest power. We seek escape, instead of victory. Who

indeed stands by the cross that meets him, desiring no deliverance from its sternest self-renunciations? Does one worldly aim meet a disappointment? And does God thus invite to that complete crucifixion of worldly hopes, which may place us beyond the power of any possible external change? Have the enchantments of the world in which we hitherto believed been proved a falsehood? To whom do we turn again full often but the same magician, though his words are seen to be a lie to weave another spell to beguile us of our sorrow. It was all like the bubbles floating in the sunbeam, yet vanishing into nothing when we sought to grasp them in our hands. Yet instantly, by some new excitement equally baseless, we seek to expel the remembrance of the old. Ah! how few are those royal souls, who calmly sit down among the ruins, when the building of their worldly hope falls around them, desiring no false solace to direct their thought, refusing to build any more forever upon any vain foundations! How few refuse all superficial consolation, going down instantly and resolutely into the deeper affections of the heart, into that well, which indeed is deep, but whose waters spring up into everlasting life! What draught will we not eagerly accept, to bewilder our senses, to charm away the bitter remembrance, to intoxicate for all the years of life, if that were possible, rather than singly strive for this abso-

lute triumph. What oblivions do we not seek through the lapse of time, what diversion of mind through new excitement, rather than to go and wrestle with the temptation in the very wilderness itself, until they are put to flight forever. How slowly we learn the wisdom that refused to drink the wine and myrrh.

Such meditations suggest the question whether there has been much of *true* self-renunciation, even where Providence has most graciously invited it, by placing needful crosses in human paths. Does not experience indeed, often compel that question? Why does a second visitation of calamity so often overwhelm us as utterly, as if no cross had ever been met? Was it not change, rather than triumph, which calmed the heart? Was it not the opiate of time, the intoxication of new and equally baseless hopes, rather than the serene victory of self-renunciation? We shrink from opening again the sorrows of the past. Yet we should never hesitate to probe the wounds of the heart with an unfaltering hand. Not from the text can we learn any such mistaken compassion. The grave wherein thy hopes were buried in the bitterness of a "first grief!" Hast thou forgotten its teaching in the clamoring of other voices? Or didst thou triumph by a living faith? *Didst* thou triumph? Then why is the grave still to thee a darkness and a woe, as when thou didst first place within it a darling hope? He who goes once

rightly to its side begins then to say in the very flowing of his tears, "O grave, where is thy victory?" We know the world exclaims, no repetition of the trial can make it less bitter to the soul. No familiarity can make the angel of affliction appear otherwise than as the messenger of grief. We may not take away its sadness, or save from all its agony. It is of the "new heaven" of the soul, the heaven to which none upon the earth perfectly ascend, the beloved disciple speaks when he says, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain!" Only the first opening beams of that bright day of unbroken peace may visit us now. Yet still, that opening beam may come. *One* true reception of the lesson of change begins to place us above its power. And whosoever doth not find it so, in the confession of his present darkness, exposes his previous unfaithfulness. He who has looked once upon the sepulchre in self-renunciation may see the linen clothes lying, when called thither again, as with the apostles who went to the tomb of the risen Jesus. But never can it be again as of old, the place of death. He may bedew its sod with many tears, but light is beaming from it all the while, shining through the tears, making them an aid in forming the bow of hope. Why should I not fear when no such process begins in my deep experi-

ence? Thou tried, yet not instructed soul, chastened, but never blessed, then is there cause to fear thy fancied renunciation was a dream, and thy lamp may not be found trimmed and burning when the bridegroom cometh.

There is an unfathomed wisdom in that word of Jesus, in all its applications, praying not that his disciples "should be taken out of the world, but kept from the evil." Christianity knows nothing of the spirit that would shrink from any form of sacrifice, or veil anything of its nature or greatness. It does not conceal one piercing point in the crown of thorns it may place upon the brow of the tried in heart. It does not seek to array the cross in flowers. There is but one unvarying word in those declarations of discipleship, sending such a chill of fear to all partial self-renunciations. It is ever the same, "*Take up thy cross and follow.*" There is but one spirit in the Redeemer's own hours of suffering. He always refuses the wine and the myrrh. It is wisdom always. There is no abiding solace for the tried soul except in an absolute, unconditional submission. And the more perfectly it approaches that position, the more perfect is its rest. Man must seek repose in an unfaltering and unquestioning trust in God. Even the thoughts that may appear as assured hope, it is not wise to make the foundation of our repose. I may draw many a picture of the future, beautiful to the

heart. The glad scenes of recognition there, as one after another goes to join the departed ones, may awaken a thrill of rapture in the breast, in hours of meditation. Bright conceptions of the heavenly world, as our imagination paints it, may come into the chambers of grief, and be hung around its walls, almost drawing us away for a season, from the remembrance of the present sadness. And fervent desires to soar away into a rest so joyous, may fill the heart, which possibly may indicate rather a want of acquiescence in the present, than any peculiar power of faith. But although such thoughts never tempt into any want of acquiescence with the present Providence, although they may appear entirely in harmony with the clear revelations of God's love, still it is not wise to rest upon them for consolation. What indeed can all our conceptions of the modes of future being be, but feeble endeavors of finite hearts, to comprehend the ways of an infinite love? All thy brightest dreams may fail; not because God's love shall cease, but because that love shall bestow a greater blessedness than heart hath yet conceived. Rest singly, and rest forever, upon simple faith in that unfathomed and fathomless love. Rest upon that love whose disappointments of human hopes, are only infinite blessings, too great to enter into the dreams of any *human* hope. I will not limit that boundless benignity in my thought, by curiously specula-

lating concerning its special ministries of mercy. I will not be lured into any possible forgetfulness of the full bitterness of the cup now given me to drink, even by revelling in the bright conceptions faith seems to sanction and unfold.

It is no mystery, to find Jesus never praying for his disciples to be taken from the world, or saved from exposure to any crosses it may build. It is a *dread* prayer at first, when we place ourselves in his point of view, and see the path awaiting them, as it rose before his thought. For the hour in the garden just passed away, the hour of crucifixion then at hand, with its bitter suffering, were only symbols to his prophetic soul of the path of trial and tears, of toils and of martyrdom, wherein his disciples were to walk. He saw the crown of sacrifice and of thorns to be platted for each true believer's brow. Yet for no alleviation or escape does he pray. He asks only for endurance, and for victory. And it is no mystery that in his own example, and in the teaching of that example to the sufferers of every time, he waves away every draught of wine and myrrh. The great physician is too compassionate to desire any false solace to beguile us, or any superficial healing. It is because he is the Redeemer, his call to sacrifice becomes apparently so unrelenting. He would not save from any cross whose ministry would be needful, or diminish the trial of any needful cross. Ah! Christ's



love is not a weakness. And God's love, whose manifestation it is, is not a weakness also. There is a love infinitely nobler than that which seeks to outrun the will of its object, lest its smile might cease for a season. It is the love which wounds to heal. Do we not know that the law demanding *toil* on earth, and thus brings forth energy and might in man is a glorious proof of the Father's love? Do we not know that the Providence appointing the cross to all who have aught within the heart which needs a crucifixion, is the special token of His eternal benignity? God's love appears in the path of self-renunciation trodden by the Son of God; that path leading first through the temptations in the wilderness, and passing through Gethsemane at its close. It was the beloved Son of God who was called to walk therein. And they are dear children too, who tread a similar path of trial and of glory. For inasmuch as likeness to God transcends in worth any brief delight of unchastened desire, is here to be found that love really divine, which alone we can adore.

No prayer comes from Jesus that we should be saved from *exposure* to suffering, or even to the cross itself. Not to take them from the world, but to keep them from the evil, is his only petition. And none beside should ascend from our own lips. Indeed if I were wise, I should not dare to invade in any form, the trial which may

come. For the degree of my trial is the precise measure of my need of trial. In the power of the feeling it awakens, I see the nature and the magnitude of the work yet to be performed within the heart. There is a sure revelation of the distance between my own life, and an enduring rest. Few men live who are not patient in feeling in untroubled hours. We should scarcely be *human*, could we not abide in sweetness of spirits when no clouds darken our paths. When man can bear life's smaller crosses with an unruddied breast; when he can learn to stand where others mock and revile, with an unreviling and all-compassionating patience; when he can enter the garden of trial, where a bloody sweat may bathe the forehead, but nought can furrow it with one murmuring thought, then does he begin to enter into the sublime idea of holy trust according to the Redeemer's teaching. I should not dare to benumb my heart by any deceptive draught, to the pain of the trial which alone may reveal my actual condition. Suppose change should plunge me into a distress, too deep to be imagined by ought except the woe of him who could find no drop of water to cool his burning tongue. What could that reveal except the breadth of the gulf between my heart, and the lowly faith reposing in Abraham's bosom? Suppose the tempest seem to rage around me in trying days, as it beat upon the disciples on the lake of Gali-

lee, what could that reveal to me except the fact, that the spirit of the Lord had not yet spoken in the heart with an all-commanding voice, bidding its agitations cease. Let no veil be woven to hide this truth from view. Let the heart rather render its thanksgivings for the Providence that reveals it to itself. How diverse from this the teaching of the Redeemer's life! That desires no deliverance, except an eternal redemption through a perfect victory. It will not permit us to make the crown of thorns easier to the brow by any false view of its character. It takes it with a consenting heart; saying, "Not my will, but thine be done." And it strives to wear it, until through a victorious faith and trust, every thorn shall send out a stream of holy light, as the pencil has often pictured Jesus in his hour of trial, and yet of triumph.

There is but one possibility of misapprehension, in reference to the doctrine the text enforces. There is a process of self-torture, in which some in the day of suffering sit and brood over their woe. They not only look at the present trial until they see its every feature; but they look at that alone. The little cloud is magnified into an all-encompassing gloom. They refuse to be comforted, not simply in a desire to drink the cup Providence presents to the lips; but in a morbid feeling that feeds upon its bitter grief. Ah! no such self-torturings are sanctioned by the Chris-

tian heart. The spirit of Jesus is free from morbid grief, as from the desire to hide the actual trial from the heart. He neither seeks nor shuns suffering or shame. He passes away from the enraged people, when no imperative call of truth forbids. He stands serenely in their midst when his hour is come. He courts no trial of heart. He shrinks from none, however great. He builds no cross for himself. He fears none the world may build. In no point of view does the greatness of Jesus more gloriously appear, than in this absolute freedom from any shade of self-torturing feeling, while he waves away every draught of wine and myrrh. And when we look at the manifold failures on either side in the history of the Church, we can only exclaim with increasing faith, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

It is not torture but discipline, Christianity enjoins. It adds no little of weight to the discipline the Father's eternal love appoints. And it takes no little of its weight away. It hears that dread word of the Apocalypse in reference to the unfolding of the book of God's great Providence, and the teachings written therein; "Whosoever taketh away from the words of this book, from him shall be taken his part in the book of life." Whosoever beareth not the cross in the depth of its sacrifice, may not know the peace its sacrifice shall introduce. There is a sublime word of

Scripture which says, "I waited patiently for the Lord." It embodies the essential spirit of all holy trust. There is no impatient haste to see the light of the Father's countenance, while it still is veiled. The heart lays itself low in the hand of God. It beareth patiently its own infirmities, while it besieges the throne with prayer for holiness of heart. It sitteth down in the sackcloth of grief, while it never leaves the mercy-seat in its supplication. It prays as the rent and bleeding heart is permitted to pray. But its prayer obeys one thought forevermore; "Not my will, but thine, be done." To feel the pang, and not to shrink from its suffering, to pray for deliverance, but to have no repining thought, who shall bestow that victorious patience of soul? Thou bleeding heart.

"Come! learn thy Saviour's peace :  
That Saviour, fount of good,  
Who from his birth sought no release  
From suffering, tears and blood.

O come! the holy cross  
Do thou in patience bear ;  
Who meekly meets its shame and loss,  
Its perfect peace may share."

## The Sign of Promise.

GENESIS ix : 14. "And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud."

THUS God is recorded to have spoken to Noah and his sons, when they went forth from the ark, to repopulate the earth, after the deluge. Everything except that little company, as the Record tells us, had been swept away. God had passed over the world in terrible judgment. But after the flood, the bow appeared in the cloud, as a new glance of love to the re-appearing earth. And the representation seems to tell us, it was then made a beautiful sign of promise. It became a signal that no similar destruction should afterwards come. It was the token of God's everlasting covenant between Himself and every living creature of all flesh, for perpetual generations. It was the bright seal of heaven spanning the sky, seen anew after every storm, whose glorious device should forever whisper to the heart, in assurances of grace and love.

The consideration of the literal history is not our present purpose. The correspondence between the literal interpretation, and the great facts of all profound spiritual experience, attracts

and delights our thought. It is not only true in the world of nature. It is yet more brightly true in the greater world of spiritual life, in the deep feeling of the individual soul. The deluge and the bow ! Ever do they come, as it were, hand and hand in life. They are cause and effect. And as the bow appeared after the deluge to the ancient world, a token of God's everlasting covenant with all flesh, so it never appears in its brightness to the individual heart, as the assurance of a covenant between itself and its God, until its former imperfect life hath been swept away as by a flood. And then, when God brings a cloud over the heart, He setteth his bow in the cloud. Observe some of the bright illustrations of a truth so full of consolation and hope.

Man can never truly see God indeed, until the selfish and earthly life he may have formerly lived, hath been entirely swept away. A flood must absolutely destroy that old earth, and all its works. The true conviction of God's ever-present and boundless grace, for instance, is the child of the deepest sense of our entire dependence. Ever, while man retains a vestige of the fancy, that in himself dwells any power which can be moved without the immediate presence and aid of God, must he fail to see the perfection of the Father's love. Every such imagination must pass away. Every *dream* of man, that he can be or live without a present agency of God as direct, although it be in uniform ways, as in any

miracle of the past must be dispelled. And then, when he looks around in absolute lowliness, feeling that he only breathes, by the breath of God, that he only thinks and feels through the instant presence of the indwelling spirit of God, then the bow appears in its brightest promise. That perfect prostration of soul alone, and at once, reveals this token of the covenant of grace between God and man, the Father and his child. Once he lived, habitually recognising nothing higher than his own infant weakness. Once he saw the ever-present One, only in events awakening especial wonder and awe. Now each breath is a *gift*. "The hairs of his head are numbered." Each thought of purity is an interposition of grace. Wonderful as miracles, are all whisperings of truth. Is it not clear, that only in this absolute death of every imagination checking the conviction of our dependence, can this sweet, this redeeming sense of God's perpetually present grace be born? Then is the Lord God's voice heard forever among the trees. Then do we know it is the Comforter that whispers forever in the soul, to check its rising passion, or to soothe its rising fears. Then do we practically, and in glad thankfulness of soul begin to believe, that

" Every virtue we possess,  
And every victory won,  
And every thought of holiness,  
Are His alone."



But why should we linger upon any such specific illustrations of the truth we are contemplating? We advert at once to its most perfect illustration; to the great change which occurs in the regeneration of the soul. The deluge must sweep over all, or man is not born again. Must not the heart yield an unreserved submission to the word and will of God, that the whole body may be full of its light? When the eye is *single*, the light appears. Two warring wills in the heart, the will of the flesh, or of selfish aims, contending against the will of God, revealed in our inward recognitions of truth and righteousness! How may man then see the sign of the covenant set on high in his soul? The heart dwells in unrest. It is distracted by the conflicting claims of the undeniable law, and the rebellious passion. It is as the seat of a civil warfare, desolated by the strife. What it wills, it does not. What it wills not, that it does. Ah! one single reservation in the will of man, instead of the sweet peace of God, banishes abiding peace from the heart, as by an irrevocable law. Question not the great truth that man must go on in unrest and agitation of heart, until he voluntarily subjects everything to the voice of the divine will, always walking with him in the garden, and coming forth at the cool of the day, in reflecting hours, to say "What is this that thou hast done?" When the selfish will is put beneath us, then be-

gins the peace of the adoption, and atonement. "There is no condemnation" to them who are thus indeed born anew. The *beauty* of the Father's will is seen when it is regarded with a consenting heart. The law once speaking in thunders, through the rebellious attitude of the soul, is seen to be grace and truth, in the reconciliation coming whenever the life of the spirit revealed in Jesus is born. After that deluge, the bow of promise appears. Where the cloud frowned upon the unreconciled heart, that sign of the covenant, that smile of God is sweetly seen, soothing its fears to rest.

Truly the great events in the history of the world, appear to be symbols of the great events in the experience of the individual heart.—The record of the race is written anew in its essential meaning, in the progress of each single life. To every man there must come a flood. The necessity is found in the fact of his fall; and the fact that thereby he hath given power in the soul, to a will resisting the commandments of the law written by the finger of God, upon a more enduring tablet than the tables of stone, the tablet of the heart. For whoso liveth, and sinneth not, himself even being witness? A deluge must come to sweep away every vestige of the corrupted earth, this corrupted will has formed. And this unreserved surrender of the heart, is its birth in God, when this will of the flesh is sub-

dued, the word of God comes forth in the soul, with its blessed revelations of light and truth. Then the Christ is born in the heart. And as the angels sang when the Son of Mary was laid in the manger, in tones that reached and enraptured even mortal ears, so there is rejoicing amid the heavenly hosts over the sinner that repenteth. They strike the harp anew when the life of God is born in any soul of man. The flood must first come. And then the sign of the covenant appears, bending in its beauty to embrace the trusting child. And the sweet whisper can never entirely cease to be heard, "It is the token of the everlasting covenant between me and thee."

Here it is we may find an explanation of facts in the deep spiritual experience of men, and in the Providence of God, which often appear mysterious to many human hearts. Here is the explanation of that apparent mystery to the eye of the understanding, the fact, that the most saddening experiences are often the most blessed; that the sweetest sense of God's eternal love, is felt by those with whom He appears to deal most severely in His dispensations. Who will tell you in more heartfelt tones, of the overflowing, changeless love of the Father than those lowly and stricken ones, that are fed by the ravens like the prophet of old, or are standing over the graves of the forms once so joyous in life? Where do you find the "love casting out fear" more frequently, than

in the hearts upon which Providence hath laid, what appear to the worldly eye, its most fearful dispensations? As a general statement, who does not know that the voice of song and of mirth, rather than of praise, goes up from the palaces of the world? And when you listen for the wail of discontent, out of those same palaces will you hear it come, in the weary interval between its feasts, while from the bereaved dwelling, the spirit's song of consolation sweetly sounds upon the silent air. Where do you see piety more entirely free from all distrust, the smile of God on the face of his child, than upon the countenances of some kneeling in prayer amid the wreck of earthly hopes, or by the lonely hearth? This is not mysterious to the spiritual eye. The flood sweeping away that in which we trusted, causes us to turn to the Everlasting. The significance of the expression when applied to the spiritual life, is deeper far than the partial meaning we might often give it, "We cannot be quickened, except we *die*." For every outward thing taken away from the faithful heart, becomes in its loss as so much inward strength directly imparted. The soul learns to walk without that staff. It draws new life from the living fountains, and attains in the strength of God, a more truly self-subsisting energy. Man becomes as one who has eaten the Book of Life, throughout whose every vein its strength is continually flowing. And

one perceives here also why Providence reduces men by such an unsparing hand, to this loneliness and desolation of change. The sense of inward want must be awakened in the soul. And oft-times, no ministry may awaken it, except that of change. The finite to which we are clinging must be rent away. And then the infinite may first rise in its beauty before the praying heart. I have seen one who stood intellectually assenting to the bright truths of the Redeemer's word, but who had not passed through the valley of self-renunciation, to the living height of an inward faith and love. Three times, with a suddenness which gave no warning, the forms of blooming children were changed to lifeless clay. All God had given, were taken again. And then, when the deluge had swept over all, the self-renouncing spirit saw the bow set high in the cloud, bright in promise and hope. And a heart that has once seen that promise in its experience, knows it shall never again be utterly overwhelmed. Ah! how our thoughts are continually turned to Jesus, as the beginning and the end of all illustrations of the deeper life of the soul! Who hath ever stood in a loneliness like his? Upon him the cross was laid. What did not Providence take away, of all which seems dear to the undisciplined heart of man? Upon whom did Providence lay a burden so great as upon the beloved Son? But who hath uttered the word Father, as it came

from his lips? And who hath known the sweetness of that legacy of his love, when he said, "My peace I leave with you." The Son of man dwelt in heaven, while he walked the earth, and therefore angels came and ministered to him in his agony. It is indeed amid the scattering of earthly hopes, from the experiences of mourning, from the stake of martyrdom, from Gethsemane, and from the cross of Jesus, that the deepest, and most glowing expressions of confidence and love, have been heard by the ear of men.

The manifestation of the infinite love comes to bless us, when finite blessing is swept away. Sometimes we are indeed permitted to *see* the bright verification of the ancient promise, and the giving of the token of the covenant to those whom the deluge is overflowing. How does it appear to some when the bodily strength faileth, and the last earthly hour draws near! Have you never seen at such moments, the sweet assurance felt in the heart beaming through the failing eye, like Heaven's especial smile of welcoming love? There is joy at such an hour we doubt not, in the spirit casting itself upon God, such as the soul may feel, when in the fulness of love it communes with the friend most loved on earth. There is a confidence and trust, such as the child may know, who clings with undoubting faith at the first thought of danger, to the mother's breast. There is a spirit that looks upward in joyful hope when

speech is failing, and murmurs forth its single prayer, all prayers in one,

“Thy will, my God ! thy will be done,  
And let that will be mine,”

Then indeed is the sign of the covenant seen. No wonderful token of acceptance appears. No voice is heard, speaking its approval out of the deeps of heaven. But in the deep places of the soul, *faith* hears it speak. And in the light covering the sinking features, the seal of heaven seems to be placed upon the countenance of the departing. Hath Providence impressed any scene like this upon the tablet of memory ? Then fear the deluge no more. Trust in God's covenant sign.

In what ceaseless beneficence Providence directs the various ministries of life to lead man to this blessed experience ! How it calls him forever to look up and see its sign of promise ! How beautifully significant when regarded from this point of view, appear all this unrest, these devisings and disappointments in our searchings to find a home for the soul ! Man builds up and pulls down one fair structure after another, writing upon each the promise, “This shall satisfy the desire of the heart.” “He gathers to him men-singers and women-singers, he maketh gardens and orchards, only to say, sooner or later, it may be, ‘This also was vanity.’” The sigh

echoes through the chambers of luxury when the peal of laughter ceases to be heard. As the soul looks out upon this ever-scheming, and so continually disappointing life, from the calm places of contemplation, how full of significance, and of admonition also, are its varying scenes! How benignly this great Providence pursues the individual heart, giving it no peace in all its superficial working, constraining it, as it were, into rest! Man knows not full often what a divine law controuls him, when he finds himself compelled to turn in weariness from scenes once fair to eye and heart. He hears not the voice of God, speaking to him in its benign invitations. He feels the unrest. But it is a sighing he knows not how to interpret. It is the moaning of the soul for that Father's house, whence it hath wandered. Men know it not; and with a blindness like that of those who rejected the Redeemer of old, they rebel against this experience, inviting them also to their redemption. Truly may we say with one of the sainted spirits of the world, God hath given all things to man but peace. And ever is he saying in his providence,

“Yet let man keep the rest ;  
But keep them, with repining restlessness,  
Let him be rich and weary ; that at least,  
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness  
May toss him to my breast.”



It is sad that man should need to meet the weariness, before he will fly to his Father's breast. But it is sadder still, that he should fail to perceive the meaning of that unrest whereby God would draw him to Himself. And saddest of all it is, that he should ever need flood after flood to sweep over his outward life, before he will look in faith to the bright covenant of promise. What multitudes of hearts only seek to build up Babel towers to give them refuge! In their vain dream, they would raise themselves above the waters that may come. Or in a more frequent folly, instead of casting themselves at once upon the everlasting arm, one brittle staff is taken to supply the place of that already broken, and the soul has as little self-sustaining life as before. The home the man builds for himself may appear more majestic than that amusing his childish dream. But it may equally fail to be any home for the *soul*, and it may equally prove to be based upon the sand.

Not to those who turn to these Babel towers, or who supply the place of one transient support by another as transient, can any fulfilment of the promise come. Yet is it still an eternal truth, as every mind may perceive, though it hath not been verified in any living experience. Turn to God in any cherished conviction of an absolute dependence, and a faith in his perpetual presence and boundless grace shall come, to be quickened

anew by every gift, to cheer the heart wheresoever it may move or rest, wherever it rises up to labor, or lies down to repose. Man shall then feel himself forever in the hollow of the Almighty's hand. Turn to the law of God with an absolute submission of the will, and we shall know the adoption of sons, whereby we may cry, Abba, Father. Let an inward renunciation of heart sweep away our trust in the changing, clinging only to the everlasting, and the token of the covenant shall appear to the heart. Yes, and when, by the blessed unrest that will not cease until he turn to his Father's house, or by the desolation of his earthly home, or more wisely still, by the voluntary surrender of the heart, man finds the flood imaged in his experience, and sees the covenant bow, it is with the soul as with the ancient earth. It can never more be overwhelmed. The glorious teaching is intellectually seen to be true. Let the spirit come, brightening and deepening the assent of the mind, into the glorious faith of the heart! Why will man be like the dove flying over the waste of waters, finding no resting place for the sole of his foot? And why does he fail to return, like the dove, to the ark of God? Why does he not seek that true Sabbath of the soul, the sweet repose of trust when life becomes a continual prayer; the Sabbath that makes the six days of labor, like the one day of worship, a rest unto the Lord? Why go mournfully on,

seeing no smile of God, when the light of his present love may forever cheer the confiding heart? Beautiful was the significance of the covenant-sign to the elder world! It declared that seed-time and harvest, summer and winter should no more cease. It declared that God would not destroy the world he had made. More beautiful is its significance to the soul! It not only declares seed-time and harvest shall not cease, each bringing in turn joyous hopes and blessed gifts to man. It says that the winters and nights of our earthly pilgrimage shall be made perpetual summer, and continued day. For the Lord God is an everlasting Light; and the sun shall no more withdraw himself from the heart that has seen the token of the covenant. Even the seed-time becometh a harvest. "And when the cloud comes over the Earth, the bow shall be seen in the cloud."

## Bethesda.

**JOHN v : 4.** "For an angel went down at a certain season, into the pool, and troubled the water : whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had."

It is a beautiful instance of an ancient mode of speech, to find the troubling of the waters of the pool attributed to the descent of an angel. Modern speculation sometimes appears to lay a rude hand upon all such forms of expression. It may be, and doubtless must be, a progress to a more intimate recognition of a present God; where the believing soul would not speak of an angel, because it directly sees the Father himself, in every ministry of healing and of love. But we may learn to disbelieve in the angels, before we gain a profound conviction of an immediately present God. The heavens may become empty of all these shining messengers, before they are forever filled to our imagination and our faith with the one universal light and life. We might enquire into the particular elements existing in these healing waters, as they gushed out at peculiar seasons with a peculiar virtue, until in the discussion concerning natural causes, the idea of an angel's, and almost of the

Father's presence, vanished away. It is sad when a momentary tendency may be found in any stage in the progress of thought, to sever the golden chain binding all events directly to the throne of God. It is more philosophic, as well as more grateful to the heart, to accept the mode of expression the text presents, than to go one step upward in the train of causes, and fail to ascend to the cause of all. An angel *was* there when the healing waters flowed. Their beneficent flowing was a distinct manifestation of God's love in his universe. And were not the waters themselves His angels, messengers of his changeless and sweet compassion?

The troubled pool possessed an especial healing virtue. Bethesda—that is to say, house of mercy—was its customary and significant name. And thither the multitudes of the diseased continually gathered to receive the blessing. We select the text of course, on account of its symbolic application to human experience. The troubled waters everywhere seem to be God's especial messengers of healing.

It is an angelic ministry evermore, to startle man from his habitually superficial mode of life. The great difficulty in the world, is to make the heart conscious of its actual and infinite necessities. It sleeps upon the surface of the depths of its own affections, never knowing the hidden treasures of a deeper life, lying all unseen like

the fairest gems in ocean's secret caves. The waters must oft be troubled, that these may be thrown upward into view. The life of numberless souls is like the superficial life of childhood. It may seem bright and fair, yet is it superficial still. It dreams not of wants whose cry shall be heard in the day when a more comprehensive life begins, surely as the cry of infant weakness when it awakes to present being. And when that consciousness is really and fully born, almost as the child instinctively nestles closely to the parent here, will the feeble soul the offspring of God, flee to its Father's breast. Thus is it when the intense conviction of spiritual unworthiness begins to be known, opening dread necessities unrealized before, to its startled view. I see how the spirit stands amid that experience, perishing with the new hunger preying upon it, yet finding only husks in all it welcomed once as the joy of its existence. And I know how the troubling of its deep affections must banish its rest, until it arise, and mid difficulties and tears it may be again retrace its steps, treading over again the long path of its wanderings, and stopping only at its Father's feet. No lower, no finite aim can any more avail, when its infinite desire is awakened from its slumber. No other solace can wipe away its tears. Ah! thou wandering, thou prodigal heart, once wandering, now reclaimed, was there any peace for thee, until in

a sweet submission the kiss of reconciliation from thy forgiving Father, assured thee of forgiveness? And couldst thou fail to flee to him, scourged on by the conviction of unworthiness and need, and sweetly drawn by remembrance of the love in that Father's house? And was not the troubling of the pool the chosen ministry of healing, the angel of that redemption? And it is the same law which acts within the heart, whenever any other deep experience, any day of saddening and terrible change, reveals the infinitude of its desires and wants. All transient refuges are falling then. And the remembrance of the infinite, by a resistless tendency of feeling arises within the breast in its exceeding beauty, a covert from the tempest, a refuge from the storm. The soul is like the dove sent out from the ark, flying over the waste of waters, seeking a resting place for the sole of its foot in vain. It can only return from its sad and disappointed flight, imploring the hand of love to be put forth again and take it to its only rest.

Bethesda, the troubled pool, the house of mercy to hearts in need of healing. I am continually impressed more profoundly alike with the necessity of this troubling ministry, as a general fact, to awaken the heart, and with its power when it comes. It is not a necessity in God's providence, abstractly considered, but a necessity from the general position of human hearts. Life too

seldom fails to be superficial, until its great deeps are *broken* up. It speedily settles into the same routine, scarcely visited by new convictions, unblest by new truths, attaining no great steps in its progress, until it may be called by some apparently rough and unwelcome voice perhaps, to unaccustomed thoughts, and feelings unknown before. So is it among the nations. And therefore are the days of great and sometimes terrible revolutions, so frequently the world's special days of light, and of advancement. And the occasionally rapid progress of its more quiet ages, is often but the simple unfolding of principles established in its heart in times of revolution and change, troubling its very deeps. So is it especially in individual experience. Man often fails to seek the healing of his spirit, until he is driven, as it were, by some stern necessity. He too seldom hears the still small voice of truth in his bosom with a believing and obeying heart, while outward voices are musically saluting his ear. He too seldom seeks an inward life of fervent feeling, while the outward life is all fair and beautiful. He must generally see that fairness and beauty fade. Disappointment in some way must cloud his hitherto sunny existence, ere he will believe in the living faith of the soul, that all these outward things shall wax old like a garment. The experience of ages might instruct. But it often avails little until it becomes our own,



by the same bitter trial of the pained and bleeding heart. How often those who plead for the truth of God are compelled to turn away in despair that any word may penetrate the soul, until it be enforced by some troubling angel of Providence! And how are they authorized to feel thus by the prevailing experience of man! Should not weak man feel *that*, however true and beautiful his word may seem? Even Jesus, the incarnation of God, spoke in vain, when there was no ear to hear. That declaration of the Master, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God," how true it is to the experience of man! Interpreted in its broad meaning as Jesus doubtless designed it, applying to all with whom life is continually clothed with outward charms, and warning of the imminent danger of neglecting the world within, he only declared the prevailing experience of the world in saying, "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for such to enter the kingdom of God."

The troubled pool is the great Bethesda for human hearts. And its blessed power when we are truly led down into its waters, is as impressive to me, as the fact of the practical necessity of such a ministry. It is not true that man always finds it healing. But although he fail in that, he can no more return to the superficial life wherein he slumbered once. The conviction of the soul's

everlasting necessities once known, can never be buried again in oblivion. The man may no more be a child. And if he fail to enter into any better rest, childhood's peace is forever gone. The soul is like the spirits driven of old from Eden's bowers. A sword turns every way to guard the gate against all possibility of return. It is a life of unrest henceforth, where thistles and thorns pierce the suffering feet, or it must press on to the bright paradise of God. And if the healing come, the soul's deep feeling itself unfolds the majesty of its own inward life, in contrast with everything beside. In the hour of intense spiritual conviction, in the day of deep and bitter bereavement, when the heart's eternal need is piercingly known, we can listen to no faltering exhortations against the folly of any outward reliance. Before the awakened spirit, the earth with all its grandeur and its glories seems rolled together as a scroll, and there is no place for them. And it stands alone before its God, perishing without his benediction, his forgiving and upholding presence.

Indeed these peculiar experiences not only awaken the new and nobler feelings they demand of themselves, but they give new power and meaning to the usual course of life. The deeper feeling gives a deeper insight into all of Providence, so that its falling sparrow is a ministry of most gracious revelations. The blessing of Bethesda descends and rests upon every place, where

no troubling angel visits us. Thus do all things become new to the living heart, until man gazes upon new heavens, and a new earth. It is with the soul as with one of awakened taste, aroused to a true perception of this wondrous world of nature, so radiant in beauty. And then a thousand scenes unmarked before, begin to wear new charms, and impart a new delight. It is like the ministry of the miracle, compelling the slumbering heart to perceive the present God in the startling wonder, and thus opening its eyes to behold an equal glory in every beam of light, and every glistening drop of dew. The unwonted experience touches the soul walking blindly before in the direct presence of God. And like the blind man in the day of Jesus, it heals of the blindness forevermore. So must it be of necessity. The awakened, far-reaching mind must see new meaning in common life, hidden from it, while in its slumberings, as the keen eye sees objects clearly defined in the far horizon, where another perceives nought but mist. And what would it need save the eye of faith and love possessed by the redeemed, to find all things fair even here as the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven.

The troubling ministry we say, is peculiarly the healing angel. And here a consideration is suggested, at the same time most humbling to human pride, and peculiarly illustrating the Father's mercy; a thought instantly bidding our

occasional murmurings to cease. It is not the eternal purpose of God's Providence, but man's usual indifference, which make these unusual Providences peculiarly angels of mercy. And the thought most overwhelming us in humility, is the fact that human hearts must be *driven* so oft to the inward life which can alone become their rest. Man may obtain it all without the struggle and the grief, if he would but hear the never-ceasing calls of Providence. Why should he wait till the darkening of his outward life compel him to its pursuit? Why will he not be drawn by God's everlasting love forever pleading? Why must he be crucified, before he will be saved? It is indeed an entirely self-renouncing spirit which must always be gained; one ready to suffer at the call of truth. And man is in deep peril of self-deception until the actual cross is laid upon his shoulder. And yet may he yield his affections so gently to truth, when everything around is bright, that the same spirit shall be gained. What men term a cross, would be no cross to him in reality, should it come. *Disobedience* then, would be the only trial. God's Providence is not void of redeeming power, except at particular seasons when the waters are troubled, like Bethesda's pool. The stream is always gushing from the eternal fountain. Man need not wait for some troubling angel to descend before he may be healed. The angels are always coming with their sweet voices

of instruction, if we would but hear. There is not one of those deeper affections of the human heart which sometimes bind us with strongest ties to the earth, which was not designed, I think, to awaken the capacity for an infinitely higher and deeper love, and thus lead the soul onward to its home in God. The angels cry and plead everywhere. They "stand by the way, in the places of the paths, at the coming in at the doors." None need to wait for some aiding hand to put them into the pool at the favored season. God's Providence is a perpetual house of mercy, whose gates are open day and night forevermore.

And this is a deeply humbling thought, that man must be *driven* to seek his *rest*. The invisible things of God were witnessed and revealed forever by this world of beauty. And man *might* have heard the voice of the Lord God forever walking with him in the garden, until in his perpetual consciousness of that holy presence, no miracle would have been needful to give him sight. He might hear the angels always hovering near, and never wander. And does not that thought so humbling to man, in any consciousness of his need, illustrate and glorify the Father's mercy? Is not this the most deeply subduing thought of God, the sweetest conviction, that he follows our unwilling hearts with his cloud of reclaiming messengers? That is the peculiar power of the cross itself. It was borne for sinners. And if the

waters must be troubled to heal, is it not an adorable mercy still? If the rock must be smitten, as of old, what is so merciful as the rod which smites it, that its living fountains may be gushing out? Nay what more merciful than to bring us unto the kingdom of heaven by violence, when we do not hear and obey the gentler invitations of the spirit of grace? In what profound humility, in what fervent gratitude may we say in such visitations, "An angel descended to trouble the water," that we might be persuaded, if by any means it were possible, to step in and be healed.

And here, once more, is the everlasting rebuke to every murmuring thought. Dost thou murmur, thou stricken child of God? Does the spirit of dark and gloomy questioning ever rise within thee, even in thine hour of agony? Even these things do not always instruct us. As men disregarded once both the usual providence of love, and the wondrous love of Jesus, so do they fail sometimes now to hear all the various angels of God. We do not live for the inward life, although outward disappointment comes to warn. Ten thousand human hearts are here, not ready to step in and be healed, notwithstanding they have been lying long in their infirmities, and though at many seasons the conviction of their infirmity has been bitterly felt. Thou murmuring soul, doth not the world need chastening, when all its chastening hath not cured its

folly? Dost *thou* complain? Number the messengers of God *thou* hast permitted to pass unheeded by, and thou wilt put thy hand upon thy mouth, and be dumb. Consider this, and thy silence will be broken by no more murmuring words. Thou wilt only say, let the troubling angel descend, that my own spirit may be led to the fount of healing and of life!

The troubling ministry, the angel of healing. Humanity looks upward indeed in hope forever to a nobler condition of the soul. One of the bright declarations in the description of the heavenly life in the Revelation, tells us, "And there shall be no more sea." It indicates a state, wherein the need and the work of the troubling ministry shall be past. The heart is fixed in God, where tears are wiped away. The thought of that great attainment indeed never dies in the human breast. All experiences of disquiet and unrest, only serve to make the longing more intense, for its future attainment. It is the promised land, forgotten never in all our wanderings. What indeed is all the world continually seeking in its vehement effort and desire, tossing itself on a sea of anxieties, of hopes and fears? What is it seeking but a state of rest, in which there will be no more sea? That thought floats over us ever as a dim, but unforgotten hope. But as a practical truth, it is only through the trial and the cross we enter into its abiding rest. When the last rebelling passion has been entirely crucified, and no feeling re-

mains to awaken unreconciled and agitating thought, when the word of Jesus hath said in commanding power to every storm within the heart, as he spake to the foaming wave of Galilee, "Peace, be still," there can be no more sea. What long and piercing denials must come through our continual infidelity, what self-crucifixions, what agonies of bereavement and tears, to destroy these causes of disquiet for evermore. Who can say how oft he may need to be led into the garden, where he may sweat as it were great drops of blood in the wrestling of his heart, before we shall be able to say, "not my will, but thine be done." For unfallen hearts, the passage into the heavenly life, might be sweetly natural as the opening of the bud into the flower. To be made perfect through temptation and suffering, is the law for man so fallen, and his only hope. The *cross* is the symbol of the life of the redemption. The true heart looks up amid all its imperfections and its fears, rejoicing that this way of life is opened to its steps, though from its own unreconciliations yet, it can only travel therein at times with pained and bleeding feet. It is willing to drink the cup the Master drank, to receive the baptism wherewith he was baptized, that it may be also glorified with him. It welcomes the troubling angels, that it may ascend to the life where the troubling ceases, and there can be "no more sea."



## Blessed are they that mourn.

MATTHEW v : 4. "Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted."

THAT "they shall be comforted," is the conviction of every believing heart, although everything remain an impenetrable mystery to the eye of the understanding. For when the heart once believes a Spirit of Infinite Love is reigning, the mystery of the universe can no more be a fear. It knows there can be no clashing or contradictions, in a system where everything is instinct with life through the presence of the omnipresent God. That glorious thought is *proof* that all things must arrange themselves in obedience to a single, benignant law. No "sparrow falls" without its notice. It numbereth the hairs of our head. There is mystery still. But it is only the mystery of an unfathomable Love. Such a faith awakens in the heart a prophetic song of coming good, whenever it perceives any apparent evil. It may often see the thick clouds lowering over us with a solemn gloom. But above them all, it is assured, are the serene, eternal stars. Nay its fervent trust almost robes the cloud in light. It *feels* the darkness of the night wherein we may be standing. But it always predicts the morning. As God revealed to the trusting among His an-

cient people the never-failing hope of a Messiah to come, through their believing hearts, and as they sung the song of that hope amid their captivities by the rivers of Babylon, so through a similar trust He always discloses His cheering promises. That trust never hesitates to say to man when called to mourn, "You shall be comforted." For unless it might be so under the Providence of God, the heart always whispers that it would not be called to mourn. It knows not when the great issue of all this change shall be revealed. But, like the Patriarch who saw through long ages the Messiah's day, and was glad, it perceives this blessed day of peace afar, and is still.

It can only be the mystery of an infinite Love we say, when the heart actually believes a Father reigns. And in numberless particulars, man's only refuge lies in that simple trust. Over all the movements of the Eternal Providence, he finds inscrutableness and cloud. Questionings may arise in every smallest circle within his view, no thought of his can answer. For in a world where the angel and the worm alike are messengers of the Father's will, agents to accomplish His eternal purpose, I suppose the soul may never fully understand the mission of the minutest fact, until all its relations should be seen as they appear to the mind of God. No view less comprehensive could perfectly reveal the work of each little

change, in the accomplishment of His serene and unchanging counsels. And to the child of time, this eternal thought may never come. Yet, as his lowly trust increases, the prophecy rather than the lamentation becomes the habitual feeling of the heart. And could that trust be made supreme, bringing that sweet Sabbath of rest, the rest in the soul when God has become its portion, and its home, why should we not look upon all things in simple faith, pronouncing them all to be good forevermore?

But man may repeat the text with a brighter faith than the simple prophecy of a trusting heart might suggest. It is one of the most glorious facts in this wonderful Providence, that the most cheering truths seem inseparably connected with its darker dispensations. The blessed thought we need is folded up in the feeling awakened by the trial, as the flower within the bud. God's angels do not dwell as it were apart, in other worlds of thought and feeling than those the trial naturally opens. Then might they come indeed at our earnest call, to bear us up in the time of change by their sympathizing hands. But in a sweeter mercy still, they crowd the *same* world to which the trial introduces us, unveiling themselves with their bright words and glance of love, to every wisely reflecting heart. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted," was the word of Jesus. Blessed *are* they that

mourn, for they *are* comforted in that precise experience, is the idea I suppose he intended to convey. Here, as everywhere in Christ's teaching, the promise is the direct and natural result of the feeling or sentiment to which he refers. We desire to pursue one of those trains of reflection which may illustrate that delightful thought.

What indeed is the plain mission of these continual changes to the soul? Always the breaking up of one world of habitual life, through any painful experience, is designed to be the opening of another and a wider sphere of thought and feeling. It is thus for example, in the disturbing changes of early life. The youth turns away at least with a transient sadness from an early home, to new and untried scenes. But the change is only a birth into a broader life. He leaves his former home. He enters upon a world. He ends his childhood. He becomes a man. He bids farewell to narrower associations, however sweet yet narrow still, and moves amidst modes of thought and forms of life unknown before. So do broad views of nature suddenly salute his eyes, when he first climbs the hills enclosing childhood's dwelling-place, and gazes upon crowded towns, and waving forests, prospects all boundless, stretching out before his wondering view. There is an endless farewell to the days free from the pressure of deep responsibilities. But that pressure of responsibility is the chosen means of un-

folding the spirit's energy. There is a close to the life wherein every difficulty is solved by a guide upon whom he can repose. But the day which casts him painfully upon himself, may become the birth-day of a living soul. One could reverently say it may be with the heart in this crisis in its life, as with the disciples of Jesus when their Master departed. When they could lean no more upon his breast, they were thrown upon the life of their individual hearts, And in that development of their inward life, the Comforter came, to be within the soul as its constant guest. Truly it was expedient for the disciples that Jesus should go away. And thus it is expedient for hearts to go away from the Eden of childhood, where every tree good for fruit grows with no toil of theirs, to that trying dependence upon themselves which trains them up to a manly strength. Indeed, these early dreams of life must be dispelled, before the soul can look forth upon a grander world; a world full of mountain paths perhaps, difficult to our eyes, but leading to more extended prospects at every step of the ascent. The process may be like the transformations in the world of nature. The death to the first form of life, which only moved upon the surface of the earth, is the birth of another, which takes beautiful wings and soars through the realms of air.

One illustration brings into view the universal,

unchanging law. What is the condition of the spirit in any stage of its upward progress, but an infancy? What are all the revolutions in its life, but advancements to a nobler strength? How divine the Providence which cannot wound, except to bless; which only breaks the accustomed form of life, to lead us on another step in the spirit's growth! New facts are thus introduced into the circle of our thought, unperceived before. The narrow portion of the wide world wherein we lived, vanishes away, or is taken down. It is because our whole being is advanced to a height whence we can see over numberless homes like that, and perceive their narrowness. The progress of the life is like the progress of our thought, when the imperfect faith we have cherished is passing away. All is confusion and doubt for a season. The foundations whereon we rested, crumble down. The soul starts affrighted from its own deep questionings. But soon we find the destruction of one form of faith so hallowed, is only the result of the introduction of a diviner thought. It is like the overthrow of Judaism, when Jesus came. "Blessed are they that are called to mourn." Are they not comforted, when the change is but a growth to an enlarged and exalted being?

But the truth we are contemplating only appears in its full development, when we contemplate the most dreaded change in the circles of

human love, the change of Death. Other changes introduce wider views of present existence. This at once transcends the bounds of time. There may be faith in an immortal life, before the departure of the loved calls forth every capacity of thought and feeling in meditations upon its scenes. Yet practically, the soul may simply live in the hopes and aims of present being. Blessed are they that mourn. Then come the thoughts that wander through Eternity. Death when it draws so near, tends at once to make the boundless future a familiar theme of contemplation. The soul looks upward, endeavoring to see through the cloud gently parting to receive the lost out of our sight. We follow them as they go, seeking clearer conceptions of their dwelling place, as we follow them here, over land and ocean, in the fond meditations of affection. What new and brighter thoughts of a more exalted life may thus appear to cheer the soul! It learns to delight itself in immortal prospects. It "views the landscape o'er." It imagines the life of re-deemed hearts and blessed angels, whose chiefest joy is praise, and whose rapture is in the accomplishment of some blessed errand of the infinite love. Quickened by its own deepened feelings, and touched by the hand of Jesus, the soul begins to see with clearer eyes. And the Heaven which is little more than a glorious word to numberless human hearts, unveils its eternal walls,

and its enduring towers ; its bright employments, and its blest abodes. And there, in the midst of the new Jerusalem, is seen the Lamb who is the light thereof. And there is the Father's throne.

We press more closely still the argument we are pursuing, and experience attests it at every step. Into the depths of profound affliction we may trustingly look to find its most impressive confirmation. It is the sure tendency of everything which makes us profoundly conscious of the power and depth of the heart's affections, to impart a more exalted view of that infinite love wherein is our repose. Thou mourning heart, waking it may be in the agony of trial, to learn the unknown might of human love, made conscious of its immortal strength—has that love no great fountain whence it flows ? Man's feeble reason leads us directly in our thought to that all-perfect Wisdom, which it divinely images. The transient rays of light in human souls, suggest and unfold the idea of the great Eternal Sun of perfect truth. And man's fainter breathings of pure desire, lead at once to the conception of that all-pervading spirit of holiness and love, encompassing and filling every soul, alike as its inspiration, and its end. "He that formed the ear, shall he not hear?" And thus the fathomless capacities of human affection, in the hour revealing most their depths, may bring to view their infinite source, the love of God, whence alone they can have



their birth. The agony of the human heart, unfolding its possibilities of love, reveals the depths of the divine. The affection which is ready to die for its object, enables us to apprehend the deathless love wherein we are enfolded. Shall His love fail, who gave thee power to love? Every heaving of the bosom in its sorrow, rightly interpreted, is another revelation of this infinitely blessed thought. I know the angels watching over the little ones shall always behold the face of the Father, when I see the power of parental tenderness even here, amid the imperfections of the earth. Thou mourning one! Thy tears are only to tell thee of the ceaseless droppings of the Eternal Mercy. And the full gush of thy grief is only to give thee assurance of the endless flowing of the divine compassion.

And it is an especial charm of this consideration that the revelation grows bright and beautiful, in proportion as the trial deepens. There are departures of men which awaken little grief, and call forth no tears. The world deems it a blessing to be called to no nearer visitations of the bereaving Providence. But these can bring no revelations as they pass. They are only transient ripples then. Indeed, if this were all, the bereavements of life would be no crisis in the heart's experience, and could minister nothing to its growth. A simple tract may tell us to confide in the gracious promise, that strength shall come

according to our day. But the heart in its lowly meditations may often discover how it comes. God discloses traces of His working, although his ways may often be in the trackless deep. The more intense the agony may be, the more it develops the capacity of the soul to apprehend the fullness of an immortal love. When death appears most terrible, the victory may be most complete. Thou weepest in sad sympathy with those most terrible prostrations of calamity, where thou sayest no consolations are remaining. Weep still. Jesus wept by the side of the grave opened the next moment by his word. Yet remember, these appalling calamities may disclose the greatest revelations. Weep for yourself also, who may be setting in darkness through the want of the very teachings such events might bring you. For, "blessed are they that mourn."

We speak of course, of natural tendencies in this beneficent Providence of God, and not of any moral necessity, man may not, and does not, continually resist. We see multitudes, alas, walking over the graves of kindred, and hearing no instructing voice. It is the silence of death still, and nothing more. And they remain as before, in that grave which is alone the place of death, the engrossing life of sense. But are they not comforted, who are thus lifted up in heart to enlarged thoughts of eternity and of God? And how invariably every course of reflection upon

themes like this, directs us never to turn away from meditations concerning these bereaving dispensations! We are to linger rather amidst the thoughts, and even the griefs they bring. No blessing comes from the mourning, if we bury it in oblivion. Turn not away from the grave where the beloved are buried. Though it instantly fill the eyes with tears to look thereon, go and weep *there*. It is not nature to turn away. It is not wisdom. Go and embalm the memory of the lost in the unchanging, the fragrant affections of the human heart. And when our own love comes forth there to our view in all its fervour, to testify to the love of God, a sweet assurance shall enter the heart to say, the lost is not here; but lives forever in the Father's love. The voice of the comforter shall whisper there to the silent soul. Go to the grave. And as we look into its darkness in a deeper affection than may elsewhere move us, let us look upwards too, and the love of God shall be made clear to the glowing soul. Go to the grave. And as we kneel there in loneliness, through our more fervent trust the resurrection morn, whose sun can no more go down, shall dawn upon the lowly heart.

In one point of view, as we look upon the world, it appears as an eternal succession of trying changes. No man lives to whom pain, the prophet of dissolution, has not spoken its warning. I see few homes without their vacant

places. Some, stand in gladness at your side. The dust once honored by the presence of the spirits of others you have loved, is sleeping where you have laid it, and they are gone. But what a ministry these changes are accomplishing! We read of a time when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat, and the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burned up, and the new Heavens and the new Earth shall come forth from the creative hand of God." Always is Providence seeking in its beneficent ministries to accomplish in the experience of each individual heart, what is written here respecting the outward world. One outward heaven after another to which it looks, passes away. Its Earth, and the works that are therein, crumble beneath its feet, or change to ashes in its view. But each change is designed to be a clearer revelation of that new heaven of higher thought, and purer feeling, wherein dwelleth righteousness. It shuts the gates of the grave upon some outward joy. But it opens more widely the gate of the New Jerusalem to the soul. And were man only heedful of the process, it would lead him to a state wherein he would feel even when looking upon a change great as the destruction of an outward universe, that only the world of appearances was vanishing away, that the world of reality might more distinctly appear.

We should cease to look so sadly upon this great ministry of change, when it only overturns one form of life, to reveal to us another vastly more glorious. It opens another and higher life indeed. But we err in saying it overturns the former one, without remembering one most important qualification. For even the former life is never lost when the new one commences. The *form* of previous life is changed, but its spirit, all that was true and pure remains, and knows no change. Nothing that is of God can die, but always rises through its own immortal power, from all the deaths coming to the form wherein it heretofore appeared. The truth of Judaism lived, when its temple was trampled to the dust. The child leaves his home. But the true life of that former home sweetly reigns in every wider sphere of action, to which he may ascend. The forms of friends are laid in the grave. But they have an immortality still here upon the earth, in their quickening memories, and the ennobling effect of their virtues upon our loving hearts. And they remain with us in the *effect* of their deeds, although their special memory could no more remain. It is a blessed Providence which ordains in its perpetual action, that nothing can die save the outward form to which we so unwisely cling. Nothing but dust can return to the dust again. Even the former life can never die. The change we mourn, although we perceive not the process

always, is really doubly blessed. It only separates the perishable from the divine in all former experience, leaving the everlasting truth it contained to shine more purely, and to do an eternal work in the soul. And it would add the revelations of a nobler and more glorious form of being. Life is like the ascending prophet of old. Each passing event leaves its mantle behind it, and he upon whom it falls, henceforth stands in a new anointing of the spirit of truth and power.

Blessed *are* they who are called to mourn, not in future results of present feeling alone, but here and now, in an enlarged and more comprehensive life. They are blest in the diviner views opening forever to their advancing minds. They are blest, in the new perceptions of the divine love hovering over them as their solace, like angels in their agonies. They are blest in the more extended apprehensions of every worthy form of existence, as the soul attains a deeper thought. They leave one blessing only to receive a greater; ay, and they retain the power of the former blessing still. Angels leave us, that we may have the ministry of higher angels still. Ah! should not men repose in eternal, unquestioning trust, upon a Providence so full of grace? We do not select the brightest dispensations in appearance, its scenes of gladness and of laughter, to demonstrate its benignity. We take its mourning and its bereavements, the places of agony

and tears; the groups of stricken spirits kneeling by lonely hearths, and silent graves. There do we see the traces of an infinity of love, plain and bright. We hear the word of blessing for the mourning, and read the bright witnesses of experience, confirming the blessed teaching. And ah, if the darkest things seem especial tokens of mercy, what dazzling manifestation of love shall shine from all beside, when their glory shall be revealed? If here, we see so much of grace in the trial and the gloom, what shall we say in our more perfect right? Thou child of heaven, enfolded ever in a Providence so beneficent, what canst thou do forever but sweetly trust?

## The Cloud of Witnesses.

HEBREWS 12 : 1. "A Cloud of Witnesses."

THE Apostle applies this expression to the faithful who had lived before his day. He represents them as a great cloud of sympathizing witnesses, compassing the believers about, while they were running their own appointed race. And he seems to speak, as if the memory of such departures, and the consciousness of such an encouraging presence, must become a mighty impulse to a kindred fidelity.

"A cloud of witnesses." No thoughtful person can fail to perceive in his observation, if not by his experience, how rapidly we are becoming connected with the dead closely as with the living, in the continual departures from the circles of society and friendship. Singly they take their flight; parent, child, friend, so gradually they may go, that possibly we do not realize at first how rapidly they pass away. But when we ask at length, where is that once unbroken company of friends or kindred; suddenly we see the number of the departed may be great, as of those remaining. Even in youth that experience begins to be known, and as years advance, especially as age approaches, the witnesses become as a cloud



in their number. It is not a single, familiar household voice alone, once speaking to our hearts on earth, which now only seems to speak from the skies. A throng is already there, and their silent, but united testimony and invitation, may have a power to the spirit of faith at occasional hours, almost as great as any voice of love still saluting our ear in the dwellings of the world.

It is a sure, and yet a blessed process, the sure course of years is carrying onward. It is blessed, though it may only be advanced amidst many tears of bereavement and pains of separations, keen as any pang of dissolution itself. For it is a glorious testimony these rapidly increasing companies of the loved in the spiritual world, are bearing to the thoughtful soul. Meditate a moment concerning those testimonies. In the first place, the unseen world becomes more distinct every hour, as the cherished and the loved pass into its invisible mansions. It is delightful indeed to observe, how direct is the tendency of the manifold separations of life, rightly regarded, to build up an undying faith. The spiritual world is a land of shadows no more, when a cherished friend, a heart we have known, has gone to dwell there, and in proportion as the witnesses become as a cloud by their increase, will it appear as a great reality to the soul. It cannot be only a shadow then. I know its inhabitants. Familiar voices are speaking there. Well known feet are

busy in its blessed ministries. Hearts, whose deeper life hath been manifest to our eyes, are throbbing there unchanged, except in the change that brightens earthly grace into heavenly glory. The spiritual world we repeat, will be a shadow no more, as the company of the departed increases. For that world is not some scene of outward glory, never imaged even to earthly eyes. It *consists* in the thoughts, the hopes, the life of its redeemed hearts. And when this is known by previous, though now severed ties, the divine reality is partially unveiled. Ah ! I imagine not now the full brightness or beauty of that concentration of spiritual life and light around the throne. Yet bright rays entering therein have beamed across our pathway here. The nature of that glory we know, though its fullness heart hath not conceived. No ; it is not the words of instruction only, even if they be the beautiful words upon the Saviour's lips, that may impart this clear unfading faith. The departure of the loved makes the hope and the life of the resurrection plain. Is it not an infinitely gracious providence which causes the defeat of mortal hopes, to be the process to unfold an immortal assurance ? Is it not mercy to make each bereavement remove another film from our blinded and faithless eyes ? The conquests of death quicken the faith which takes away their sting. The victories of the grave destroy its triumphs. What can they do

except to increase the cloud of witnesses who compass us about?

Another testimony still, these encompassing witnesses must surely bear. They not only make the spiritual world a reality to our thought, but they invest it with new and enduring charms. It becomes beautiful to the heart, as it becomes clearer to the mind. Who are gathering there as this bereaving providence goes onward? They are not unknown beings, who might fail to attract our affections. Most familiar friends, these objects of household tenderness, parents, children, all the loved are going. And as their presence when still on earth gave to life its dearest joy, so now to the believing mind, their presence in the spiritual world, will invest the state beyond the tomb with the same attraction, and in tones still dear to the heart they seem to say, "come up hither, to dwell again with us." If home be to dwell with those to whom the heart is clinging, how surely, and how rapidly are homes building for us there! The cloud of witnesses is gathering. We are not to be torn away from present friends, to be transferred to a land of strangers, wandering like exiles from our native soil. In this gracious Providence, we are only passing from home below, to homes above; to a home where those yet left behind will soon come to dwell. And as the child born into present life, is received into the arms of deepest love waiting to

bless it, so may the soul be welcomed and blessed, when new-born in that higher world by the change of death. A better welcome even may sometimes await that better birth. The spirit entering there may not be unconscious of the love receiving it, as at the beginning of present being. The joy of glad recognitions fills the new-born hearts with an equal bliss. It is as if the infant here could instantly respond to the first full rapture of the parent's heart. This gathering cloud of witnesses! Do you think only of these fast repeated bereavements, when the tolling bell speaks of another removal from the circles of love? We know how sorrowing hearts must weep over such trying changes. Yet do not call them bereavements *only*! The cloud veiling the sun from our eyes while we are standing in the valley, seen from the mountain's top, is radiant in glory. Do not call this *bereavement* only! Observe also the Providence which gently smooths the way before our own feet, building us a home wherein the heart can rest, before it may summon us also to depart. Do not call it bereavement *alone*! The more frequent these bereavements are, the more beautiful that home. How dear that word of Jesus to the sorrowing disciples, just before his departure; "I go to prepare a place for you: And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again to receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

And is it irreverent to think so ; what are all the departures of the honored and loved, but their going to prepare a place, a home for us ? And when that place is thus prepared, the touch of the angel of death to our own dying lips, is but the kiss of welcome to that eternal home.

It requires but a few years of intimate connection with any circles of friendship in the world, as we have intimated, to impress these thoughts with an almost inexpressible power. From how many vacant places, forms have already gone, to become a part of that cloud of encompassing witnesses ! What beautiful ascensions may have blessed our eyes, upon which we might stand and gaze, as the departing went up into heaven ! How rapidly the homes above are building for us all ! It is good to meditate upon that rapidly growing company ; to hear their testimonies of love and hope, of endurance and trust. It is good to distinguish the various and attractive forms of those who are in that ever-increasing cloud. There are they gathered, the infant forms from our homes ! And they are no more pallid and cold, "but clothed in a deathless bloom." They are tried by pain no more ; but they sing "a song only the hosts of heaven can hear." And by their teachings of an immortal life they minister to the parent now, as the parent could not have ministered to the child. There are those of maturer years ; taken from lives of man-

ly strength, or affection's fondest service, in earth's noblest, nearest, and most beautiful relationships ! There are those of many days, who passed away as the last honored members of a departed generation. They speak in the memories of almost every dwelling ; in the experience, nearer or more remote, of almost every life. These messengers of the resurrection coming in these bereaving Providences, these departing friends, whose departures take away a present charm from the earth, to make the heaven more bright ! To whom hath not their message been sent, with its deep instruction ? Who is not encompassed with their heavenly ministries ?

And not such alone are there, to make the heavens beautiful to our faith and love. There are the servants of truth and holiness in every time, whose countenances we have not seen, but whose souls we know, and whose words have been to us a breath of inspiration. There are the martyrs who died to win the inheritance of truth and freedom wherein we rejoice ; the prophets of elder and of later days. There is the great Church of the living God, the Church triumphant now. And there amidst the shining band, my Saviour forever dwells !

Lift up thy tearful eyes, thou child of sadness, and behold that bright cloud of witnesses ! See Jesus also, the author and finisher of our faith ; at once its source, and its end. The Providence

which is gradually, and yet so rapidly connecting us with the unseen, closely as with the present, viewed with earthly eyes may be only one sad succession of terrible separations. But to the believing heart it brings ever brightening and more joyous testimonies. Nay, it hallows the earth even, while it is ever opening the heavens. How blessed the testimonies these departing witnesses leave upon the earth, we may gratefully and thoughtfully say, though their departure may bereave us, how they sanctify this world by their remembrance! How strong and tender the associations with the places where they chiefly dwelt! The place where their feet once rested seems hallowed ground. The dwellings where those most dear, lived and suffered, and died! How are they transfigured in comparison with other homes, to which no such association binds us! They become temples to the heart, wherein a spiritual presence ever seems to rest. How eloquent a thousand homes, all disregarded by the world beside, to the deep experience of those beneath their roof! There have they known life's deepest joys. There have they poured out the tears of sorrow. There have they offered the prayer of trial and of trust. There the departed once lived and loved. There the cold forms of the beloved dead were laid. Ah! no spots where genius, world-honored, once lived, where piety most heavenly watched and prayed, is holier

than these lowly dwellings, to those who have known and felt the intense experiences at some seasons occurring there. And if haply the meek spirit of true reconciliation may have there breathed its life away, pure as the sacrifices in the world's high places, though all unknown, few ministries in God's Providence could have more of sweetness, or of power. The world is hallowed by such memories. Our dwellings are rapidly clothed in such associations. The dead have been in them all, or shall quickly be. Thoughtlessness may not heed such associations, for that hath no ears to hear. But to earnest and thoughtful souls, a voice often comes from places thus consecrated, bidding them, as it were, put off their shoes in reverence, because it is holy ground.

How these witnesses testify to us again, in the impression of their characters, as we recall their histories. It is interesting to see how the character of each we have honored or loved, tends to concentrate itself into some one single thought most true to the prevailing life, when the spirit passes away, and the name of the child becomes a bright *image* of blessed innocence, and the name of another becomes another word for patient endurance, or intense love of truth, or self sacrificing philanthropy, or that lion, yet lamb-like courage, born from the soul of deepest love. Each stands for some blessed virtue when life is



ended, and the impression is complete. Each becomes fixed as a clear unfading star in our thought and feeling. So do the great names of the wide world arrange themselves in the memory of succeeding generations, as symbols, of all the various nobler qualities which may find a dwelling place in the human heart, and one name is another word for freedom. And another is the word to mean benevolence. Honored and loved as men may be, they seldom exert their deepest influence until they die. Death not only invests the pure with a heavenly crown in the world of life immortal. It is a coronation in human feeling. A thousand misconceptions may often attend the living excellence. We fail to give it fitting reverence while it yet stands at our side. But the dead truly begin to live in the better judgment, in the reverent feeling of human hearts, when they pass away, they come to their deepest influence. When Jesus went away, then the Comforter came.

But not only may this cloud of witnesses hal-  
low the world by the associations of their mem-  
ories, and the bright impression of their virtues.  
They also open the heavens. They testify con-  
cerning the spiritual world in another sense than  
in rendering it more distinct to the mind, and  
more attractive to the heart. The apostle rep-  
resents the souls of the holy departed, not merely

as quickening them by their memories, but as present with the believers then, invisible, yet assisting angels. And the heart ever inclines to accept that statement as the expression of its faith. Only one difficulty can prevent us from always rejoicing in this glorious thought. If there be a living ministry in the days of earthly life, we can scarcely question its continuance when earthly life is ended. Jesus, the incarnation of the Father's love! A miraculous opening of the heaven, revealing him to the eye as he wondrously appeared to the disciples in Judea, could scarcely make the heart more confident that "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Whosoever *liveth*, we instantly feel shall never die. The testimony of the cloud of witnesses never fails. The departed child, whose "angels do always behold the face of the Father," whose unsullied soul the cloud of sin hath never darkened. He may now be sitting in the midst of us, like the child Jesus once placed among his disciples, giving to us more directly than that beautiful emblem, his messages from the Father. Every spirit whose deeper life was an increasing devotedness to the will of God, every spirit once rejoicing to utter any quickening words to the hearts it loved, may now be walking with us in the way. And now may its ministry sometimes cause our hearts to burn within us, as it opens

the Scripture in whisperings to our hearts, though as with the disciples of old when Jesus joined them, our eyes are holden that we see it not.

We cherish this sure, this almost resistless persuasion of the heart. It may not be wise, perhaps, ever to seek consolation by resting upon any solace like this. The true consolation comes alone from an unquestioning trust, that believes although no ray of light appear. It comes from a confidence transcending aught speculation may suggest, knowing that no heart of man conceiveth the boundless love of the Father. Nevertheless, we still cherish the thought. Out of the heart indeed are the issues of life. And there deep persuasions of the heart which arise spontaneously within it, which no reasoning can ever argue down, appear to be sealed with the testimony of God. The spiritual world which is ever taking to itself what has been the joy of life, may still be here in our midst. When Jesus shall touch our eyes, we may open them at once upon its now invisible scenes. The bonds of love that once connected us with the departed in visible communion, are not severed, but strengthened, through the departures forever witnessed. For *all* that ascended life is love. God, who maketh all things angels, sends out forever the spirits of the pure with revelations of his will. Ah ! rather would they *go* ; esteeming no joy so heavenly, as the performance of these errands of grace. The

earth is covered with the ashes of the departed. We may not step, save we tread upon some trace of their earthly life. So are we compassed about by their present spirits. They speak to us it may be, while we wake, and while we sleep. They whisper a thought of encouragement in the fainting hour. Not in imperfect words do they speak, as when here at our side, but in clearer revelations. Oh, there are a thousand avenues whereby their voices may find entrance to the heart. The departed mother may be one of the angels watching over the child. The child ascended, may come with consolations to the weeping parent. And while we linger at the tomb of those who were a true ministry to us, whither we have gone to embalm them anew in our memory, may we not reverently say they may be standing as it were behind us, as the risen Jesus stood behind Mary at the sepulchre. They do not speak to us by name, as the history records Jesus to have spoken. Yet by a kindred love, in many a thought borne in upon the heart, they bid it turn and follow them in the bright path of their ascension.

This "cloud of witnesses!" They make the spiritual world real to mind and heart. They hallow this world by their associations and their memories. They speak from the heavens as all-encompassing angels. They leave a glorious testimony on the earth, and they utter, as we rejoice to repeat, a yet brighter testimony from their no-

bler dwelling-place. We sigh over these quickly repeated bereavements. Yet even now we scarcely begin to believe what these departures should teach. And we deeply need all their lessons. How they may make the unseen world bright and lively! Ye honored ones who have departed! Ye goodly fellowship of friends who have gone in holy trust! Ye beloved forms, who left us in infant innocence, or with the zeal of the Christian's victory, the adoption of sons upon your forehead! How do ye make the gulf between the present and the future, so wide to human fears, grow narrow as ye go! How does the heart sometimes almost cast away its apprehensions, when it meditates upon those building a home for us, as they gather in that immortal company. Ye heavenly witnesses, the cloud of shining ones! Compass us about in the impression of your memories; in the testimonies of your devoted lives, and victorious deaths; in the ministries still permitted in the Father's providence. Compass us about, that we may run in patience through the way of present life, until we are taken into your bright companionship, in the pure fellowship of all the redeemed forever.

## The Christian View of Life and Death.

PHILIPPIANS I : 21. "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain."

WERE we seeking the noblest word in the teaching of the great Apostle, I am not sure that I should not select this declaration, named as the text. Few passages in his writings, I am confident, can be more triumphant. Perhaps no simple declaration *combines* so many elements of noble thought, or expresses a diviner trust. I can find abundant statements of a similar feeling in respect to death—many words equally full of immortal hope—rejoicing questionings concerning the departed sting of death, and the lost victory of the grave. And though the apostle bewails the bitter contests with his own passions yet unsubdued, and is keenly alive to the pains of his varied persecutions, I can still find pure expressions of the *present peace* attending a heavenly life, pure gushings of joy from the well of living waters, the deep fountains of faith and love in his breast. But nowhere, perhaps, do we find the triumph in both respects declared so clearly in a single sentence. Nowhere with greater distinctness certainly, do we see how the true heart is conquerer in life and death alike; over all that

could oppose it in one case, or seem to cloud its future in the other, nowhere do we see more plainly how it may make all bright through its own heaven; so that to live is Christ, that one word expressive of all hope and blessedness to the disciples' hearts, and to die was gain, the unutterable joy of his nearer presence still.

And it impresses me still more, to remember the circumstances of the apostle's history. I begin to appreciate the triumph the text declares, when I think of that. This note of joy was struck in a prison. The apostle was writing while burdened with bonds. And the release of which the epistle intimates a hope, what was that? It would allow him to go again to his loved field of duty indeed. But it would lead him into perils, from which imprisonment was a protection. Men magnify an immortal hope when the present is beset with difficulties. They paint the future more brilliantly, as darkness thickens round them. It would not be strange to hear the imprisoned apostle, bruised with rods, scarred by stripes, in peril every hour of the martyrdom he suffered at last, exclaiming, "To die is gain!" But to hear him say at the same moment, "To live is Christ," neither darkening the present by any temptation to despondency, nor magnifying the future because of the present gloom, seems to me the sublimity of holy trust. I perceive how deep the Redeemer's peace must be which he left

to dwell in the true disciple's heart. I find the comment upon Paul's own words, when he elsewhere says, "Neither death, nor life nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God." I begin to apprehend what Jesus means, when he says, "He that liveth and believeth on me, shall *never* die."

"To live, is Christ; to die, is gain." It is difficult to say which is most extraordinary, or most grand, the view Christianity gives of life, or its view of death. We are accustomed to speak of its victory over death, as its great, almost its crowning blessing. But the victory in life whereof it speaks hath a wondrous glory too. I scarcely know which receives the brightest transfiguration, when we ascend into any true communion with the spirit in which the Redeemer regarded them. The life beyond the grave, as we follow Jesus in our thought from his deserted sepulchre, is glorious indeed. It is sitting at the right hand of the Father, in a closeness of communion no earthly image can illustrate. But when he talked with Nicodemus in Jerusalem, he spoke of himself "as the son of man who is in heaven!" And he ever liveth in the same spirit of intercession, in which he pleaded with men from Samaria and Galilee. His death is scarcely brighter than his life. The Lord when re-appearing to his disciples after his crucifixion, spoke to Peter and Thomas and the twelve, and



breathed the same love, as before he went down to the grave. The ascending Saviour is scarcely more lovely, more divine, or more glorious, than the Saviour when praying for his murderers to be forgiven. And that prayer of forgiveness upon the cross brought an inward peace, we are almost ready to say, sweet as aught risen spirits may know. We go to the tomb whence the stone was rolled away, to say, "He is risen," and thus utter the assured hope of the whole race of dying men. But we follow his steps in his ministry, to see even here a risen, immortal life. And, as at times, we catch a glimpse of the deep things in his heart, when he speaks, or works some miracle of love, we learn what a divine thing it may be to live, as well as what a blessed thing it may be to die. The robe of death, and the garments of life, alike receive a transfiguration, and become white as the light.

In truth, Christianity speaks to the twofold error into which men have often fallen, in their wrong impressions of life and death. It speaks to the feeling making death so fearful, that all our lifetime we should be subject to bondage through the fear. It speaks no less to the other error, either of an old philosophy, that called the body the *prison* of the soul, and existence here of course, but a continued imprisonment, or the mistake of common feeling, which depreciates it, or in any way robs it in gloom, as a vale of tears, or

makes it anything less than an opening of heaven. According to Christianity, life and death are twin-children of the same love. According to Christianity, I think, present being and future being are only different parts of one whole. And between those parts, death scarcely interposes any seam. Life in all its periods is as one unbroken stream; growing wider, deeper, more beautiful if you please—flowing at length amid fields of “living green,” and “never withering flowers.” Yet still the stream is one. Only in *part* of its course, it flows before our view, and in part beyond our sight. The waters of life, and the waters of death, are not opposite in their nature. They are both the water of life in God’s purpose, flowing out to quicken us by an ever-increasing inspiration. Christianity does say, “To die is gain.” It speaks of unconceived glories yet to be revealed. It says also of whomsoever hath an obedient heart, “The Father and the Son make their abode with him.” The glory of the future it reveals, shines back upon the present, illuminating the scenes which are to be its preparation, and see its morning dawn. In truth, in Christianity there is a mutual re-action between the ideas of present and future being, and each is to brighten the conception of the other. The love we imagine, will walk in visible brightness in worlds beyond the grave, is upon this side of the tomb also, sending its rains and its blessings to every child. And the

love we see is a bright hint, helping us to conceive the paradise it hides. The Edens of the world whisper in the soul's ear of glories at length to be openly proclaimed. For the full fountains of love there pouring out, are only deeper flowings of the same joy beginning now in lowly hearts. There is but one God, ever the same, never hiding Himself from those prepared to see him. And there is but one law whereby his love is unfolded to view, on earth, or in heaven. The pure in heart are to see him, both here and there. They see him in sweet convictions of his changeless love; in the full consciousness of being folded in his everlasting arms. "To die is gain." But do not forget also, that "to *live* is Christ," though it be life amid perils of martyrdom, and under the bonds of imprisonment. In both states we are in the same temple. In the one case, we are in the outer court, and in the other, in the holy place, perhaps lifting the veil before the holy of holies. Christianity declares a two-fold triumph. And the triumph over a vanquished tomb is scarcely greater, than its victory in opening a *present* heaven.

"To *live* is Christ, to die is gain." I know the difficulty of maintaining this glorified thought of both the present and the future, amid all the changes, and sometime bereavements of actual life. The fact that Paul cherished it, or rather that it broke forth spontaneously from his heart

amid the perils of his way, is what exalts him most in our reverence. I know it is hard thus to regard life, in its actual conflicts, its repeated calls to mourning; permitting no clouds to cover us with gloom, and no tears to blind our eyes to the brightness *here*. I see the changes which imagination not only conceives as possible, but which Providence actually sends. And a triumph through them all often appears as an attainment almost beyond the reach of the spirit's strength, although Jesus distinctly calls us to gain it. I see a home, which three brief years changed from the glad abode of youthful strength and beauty, and almost doting parental pride, into the place of utter loneliness; where one beautiful and fair, first droops and fades away—and then one bright in youthful genius, whom we might say should live for his home's sake, and the world's sake, also departs, and it is a childless home. And next, mid clouds of grief deepening into gloom the suffering spirit could not bear. The heart strings of a parent are worn asunder, and he is laid by his children's side. And three years, from one hearth-stone, fills three such graves. Or I see still other homes where two, ay, and sometimes three, in infant days, in quick succession, pass down to the tomb; to where the mourning come back from the grave, only to close another's eyes, and the voice is heard, lamentation and weeping, which almost refuses to be com-

forted. Yet why should I speak of the scenes I may have witnessed, rather than appeal to like experiences sometime observed or known by every beating heart. For as life has been unrolled to his view, who hath not found groups of wounded hearts, and stricken homes, passing before him? Ah! haply thou hast dwelt *within* some such home, and tasted its bitterness of grief! Haply thou hast *found* it true, that the sadnesses sometimes coming, seem deeper than those fancy often pictures. *You* may think it an easy thing to speak of the brightness of life, *you*, whose homes do not miss their most cheerful voices, who do not think of occupied graves, as well as living forms, when asking where your children are. But what is it to speak thus, when life becomes a lingering crucifixion of bereaved affection? Ah! it *is* easy then to say, "to die is gain." For those whose presence chiefly made our home are fast gathering beyond the tomb. And the heart is looking sadly and hopefully thither in all its beating. But to say also with equal heart; "to live is Christ," not merely in an experience of his trial or his Cross, but also in knowing his joy, something of his unutterable peace, to live is Christ in the serene trial that amid outward loneliness looks up to say, "I am not alone." To say this also, seems a destruction of the last enemy having power to disturb. Then

there can be no more pain. Neither shall "there be any more sea."

And therefore it is, that in some cases it is more difficult to lead men truly to acquiesce in *life* with a resigned will, than to bring them to cherish bright thoughts of the future. We call it the great triumph to gain a cheerful view of death. I should sooner expect to transfigure that in the feeling of many, oh how many hearts, than to clothe life in the great Christian thought. There is much of apparent resignation, of seeming immortal hope, in this world I fear, which instead of arguing any genuine submission, or any really holy faith, is partly a proof of the want of a true acquiescence in the ordinations of God. It is so much easier when exhausted by pain to dwell upon a state of exemption from all its suffering, than to make the suffering *itself* a time of peace, that I fear me something of the willingness to go we so often find, is the weariness of weakness, more than the triumph of the soul. It is easier to think brightly of a future where no bereavements are, than to make a bereaved home glad. I can imagine another state to which I should long to go, and fill my heart with its intense desire, sooner than I can make the present peaceful. Indeed we are always longing for other scenes of duty, in the fancy that it is the shadow of surrounding circumstances, rather than the shadow

of our own hearts, which darkens our path. We deceive ourselves and are deceived in this particular. There is no objection to saying in bounding hope, "to die is gain." Paul said that with his perfectly balanced spirit. And Jesus said when his cross was building, "I have glorified Thee on the earth; and now Father glorify thou me, with the glory I had with Thee before the world was." There is no objection to saying, "to die is gain," again, heart hath not conceived to all in the love of God. For we were made to die. And this alone is proof in a universe filled by a God of love, that "to die is gain." But we distrust the spirit which does not also say, "to live is Christ." Christianity does not sympathise in any feeling which fastens its eyes upon one condition of our being in hope, while it is constantly sighing in the other. It surely will not suffer any bright thought of the future to be *built* upon present despondency. There are many to whom I would not say, seek a victory in your feeling over death and the tomb. Seek first a victory in your life; that kingdom of God and its righteousness even now. And all things needful shall be added unto you. The spirit triumphant in life as it passes on, will surely have power to make the face of death like the face of an angel, whenever it comes.

- We have spoken of the necessity of cherishing a bright view of both the present and the future, and of the fact, that the feeling which glorifies one,

and saddens the other, is partly to be distrusted. And there is deeper reason for this than we may apprehend at first. It is never to be forgotten that a true faith in immortality *must* make the present bright, as well as the future glorious. For the Christian faith is not simply that a *continuance of existence* awaits us beyond the grave. It is the faith that immortal powers and affections are here in these hearts, waking to action in their immortal love, in their thoughts of eternal truth, in their growing conceptions of God. And it is the attempt to feed them now with the living bread coming down from heaven. And if the *joy* of immortality consists in their *full development*, their present waking must be a *degree* of bliss. If it be gain to die, it is through an inward life which must make it Christ to live. The right faith makes both conditions beautiful, because they are only the spreading of different scenes around the same essential spirit. Jesus does not make any promise of immortality as a consolation, to hearts slumbering here so deeply that they now experience no blessed life. His teaching is—"Who-soever *liveth*, and believeth in me, shall never die." And the inward life he had then in view must scatter fragrance and beauty around all its paths, whether they lead into scenes of present being, or across the narrow sea of death. Its treasure is in heaven. And its heaven is in the heart. And though the comparison must be



humbly made, because we are so far removed from him, yet like the Redeemer, his peace is with him, wherever he dwells. Do you not see that the feeling which really exalts one portion of our being must exalt every other portion also? The true life is like the royal sun, the jewel of brightness in itself, wherever it stands or rests. I do not wonder to hear Paul speaking at the same time of triumph in life, and of death as gain. He could not have done otherwise. The spirit which conquered the fear of the future, conquered in all the strifes of the present. Man can never rightly say, "O death where is thy sting?" without also saying as in the same breath, "for me to live is Christ." I do not wonder to hear the rapturous expressions of inward peace uttered by tried and martyr lips, pouring themselves out in song from the midnight prison, as the Apostles of old once sang in their bonds. To those who knew the deep things of the love of God, would life show the deep things of its possible inward peace, in its perfect triumph over outward suffering. And thus have those to whom it seemed the saddest, often found it sweetest. Thus do the deepest expressions of love to God often go up from most bereaved homes. Ah! God doth not keep the gates of his heaven closed, till the portals of the tomb have been passed, then to have them suddenly opened with an all-unimagined splendour. The heaven is coming now in all

loving hearts. It gradually brightens like the morning light. Those ready to enter it find intervals of its peace in their imprisonments, or their tears. And though an element of sadness is now in their song a clearer vision shall dispel, yet still are they learning *here* the glad strains of the upper world of unbroken peace.

Our chiefest want is a true faith in an immortal life. We do not mean the faith, which believes merely in a resurrection, as an event surely to come or which goes to the Redeemer's tomb in mere assurance that he is risen, and that all of human race shall also rise. For I do not know that this *alone* avails anything for this world, or the world to come. We want the faith which quickens us to be raised *now* into heavenly thoughts and heavenly places with the Lord; that fills the soul with immortality; that makes us feel we are immortal beings, deeply as we feel we are subject to death. And then we could enter into the twofold hope expressed in the apostle's word; the hope in life, and the hope in death. We should feel the wounds of bereavement, but we should feel the balm ever pouring in to heal them. We should be alive to the pains of the cross, but we should be alive also to the peace passing understanding. Ah, my brother, prove thyself by this twofold trial. Speak not of thy reconciliation to death, when there is murmuring in thy life! Question the nature of thy content

in life, when thou tremblest at death ! See both to be beautiful, or thou canst see neither rightly. The bow of hope is not to hang only over the future, however trying present duty may be. It must comprehend time, death, eternity, all, in its beautiful embrace. And no flood can overwhelm us while that is stretched over our way. Ah ! it is a great life in the soul we are contemplating. Yet it may begin to be known. It will not come at any sudden call. The heart without an inward trust need not wonder at its absence, when smitten by trial. But it will come through constant seeking. And when it is Christ to live, doubtless, to die will be gain. And let us remember too, that when it shall be gain for us to die, it must also be Christ for us to live.

## The Death of the Young.

**HEBREWS, ix : 27.** "It is appointed unto men, *once* to die."

THE text most naturally suggests a consideration of the law of Death in its general application, folding all the children of men at last, in its sure embrace. And it would be needful to reflect upon it long, perfectly to dispel the dark views that cluster around it, covering it with gloom, and to enter into the bright doctrine of the Christian faith. The text terms it an appointment; that is to say, a universal law. And what otherwise can any universal law in this Paternal Providence be, than a great provision of Love, whose great benediction is designed to rest, upon every head? But this conclusion, so irresistible in speculation, how long it may be almost powerless, practically, over the habitual feeling of the heart! When shall we gain the conviction which can continually clothe this ordination of God with the same aspect of benignant grace, that beams from every other law of His hand? When shall we learn to regard this appointment itself, which makes every birth only the prophet of another departure, which causes every rising of the sun of being, in all its joy, to be a sure precursor of its going down amid sadness and tears, when shall

we learn to regard this as only a nobler birth? Ah, when shall we learn to see in God's providence nothing save brightness. Calling His children, not to die, but to a blest translation; and to feel there can be no sting in Death, except in the sin which makes life and death alike a retribution and a gloom?

We turn aside however from this broad general topic, to a more limited theme. To many, the law of death is always a mystery. Yet it wears a different aspect to all, when it comes in different periods of life. We may not understand why our earthly existence should be destined so quickly to cease. We may not see why the mind could not grow *here* for ages. And it is a most significant assurance to the heart, we say in passing, when we see instructions so numberless, unexhausted during life's longest day—of the infinity of mercy now concealed behind the cloud. Still, when death comes to the aged, tottering with infirmity, any degree of living faith in the future, might deem it an angel sent to rescue the soul from the ruins of its present dwelling, and to lead it to some other mansion in the Father's house it may be prepared to enter. But when it comes in earliest infancy, or when it comes to the young, who with joyous heart, and bounding feet, are ready to enter the course of active life, who are like beautiful columns in the circles of love, around which so many clinging

affections and thrilling hopes are invited to entwine themselves in closest trust, the great mystery wears to most a surpassing strangeness. That appears not so much an appointment of God, as an interruption of His appointments. The course of nature seems rudely broken by some alien hand. Could the trees of life only remain until they were bending with their natural and perfect fruit, the stricken heart exclaims, we might look calmly upon their decay. But when they fall, just as in the full beauty of the blossom we may see the fruit already forming according to our hope, or when, like those trees of milder climes, we see at once the opening bud and the golden fruit, a character already winning love, and a brighter promise of a nobler excellence, it is all inscrutableness and cloud. And when we remember too how many in failing strength are often resting upon such lives for support, leaning upon those, who once leaned upon them, these removals seem a double mystery. The vanishing of earliest infancy is scarcely so peculiar. Such spirits come, only to alight for a moment, and straightway return to God. They appear as messengers only sent to open the invisible world to the soul, as it follows their upward flight, rather than to gain any citizenship in the dwelling places of men. But to waken hopes so vividly, and then to disappoint them, to permit us to begin to taste the cup of joy, and then to dash it

from the lips, few dispensations of providence can demand a deeper trust.

It is a common mistake, to seek alleviations for such afflictions in saddening representations of the present world. Souls that are moved to sympathy, enumerate the manifold changes of present being. They number its tears. They point to its places of agony, where the cry of the suffering through man's injustice pains the ear, or the wail of the stricken spirit ascends to heaven. No shade in the picture, either from the imperfections incident to humanity, or through the unfaithfulness of individual souls, is left out of view. And the inference is, that they are specially blessed, who soon escape from an existence so perilous and so tearful. Nay, it is a common sentiment finding frequent expression, that it is a happiness to die young. Thanksgivings, rather than lamentations, should be heard at the graves of those so early gone. Almost every where, the words of consolation not only recognize that thought, but make it a basis of their exhortation. Eloquence enforces it, when it would soothe. And the poetry of consolation is oftentimes, not merely a song of faith in the future, but almost a dirge over present life.

It may be a natural tendency of feeling in saddening change, yet it is a mournful error we are sure. It may wear the appearance of deepest faith in the unseen world, yet it seems to imply

some want of trust in the present Father. It is not wise to clothe God's present providence in gloom, to explain one incident in his dispensations. We are suggesting a question thus far more terrible than any we attempt to answer. We shake the foundation where all true consolation alone can rest. We must not make it appear a blessing to die, because it is almost a calamity to live. Doubtless, the picture of life's manifold imperfections, of its actual and possible changes should have many shades. Tears are often flowing here. No heart liveth without occasional visitings of bitter grief. The place of discipline can neither be the eden of an untried joy, or the paradise of changeless rest. An element of trial and suffering is one of God's ministering angels, always present in earthly scenes. And yet we must remember the bright things here also, making life itself a blessing, or the providence we *see* becomes a dark and frowning cloud, suggesting no cheering hopes respecting the great dispensations now unexplained.

It is from an entirely opposite view the sweetest consolation comes. The statement at first may possibly appear as a contradiction ; yet precisely as we learn to regard present existence as a blessing and a gladness, do we begin to remove the gloom resting upon these early departures. Magnify the love beaming through every part of God's universe now opened to our view, and I have a



demonstration of the mercy which must be equally present in all that is yet a mystery. Doth the same fountain send forth sweet waters, and bitter? I interpret the particular difficulty by the general spirit, attested so clearly by its numberless witnesses. The occasional clouds melt away in this pervading light. It is with man, as with the child in his earthly home. When parental love surrounds him ever as an atmosphere, when the glance of tenderness which first fell upon his heart, like the sunlight upon the earth, waking its affections into life, beams upon him still unchanged—a sweet filial trust can scarcely fail to say that the unexplained commandment, the apparent burden, must be an expression of the same affection. Oh when shall we learn to feel as the spontaneous impulse of the heart, a confidence in the All-merciful deep as that in the implicit trust of fervent earthly friendships; a confidence shuddering at every transient questioning thought as almost a crime. Would we open the noblest, the exhaustless fount of consolation? Recount with glowing heart we repeat, the radiant signatures of God's exhaustless love. Come with the tongue of eloquence, not moved to any sad discourings concerning the present world, but touched by a glow of divinest, wondering at the surpassing revelations of a Father's tenderness. Come with a soul laboring to tell the miracles of an infinite mercy, manifested here to the eye of faith. Strike

the harp to notes of gladness, celebrating the compassions of a present God. Pour out these great anthems of praise, chanting forth that high argument, until the light of love appear to envelope every present scene, as the brightness of the noon-tide dispels every shade. Then the spirit soars towards that great trust which can look upon all things God hath made, and call them good, mourning may still be in the heart we know. But each token of love we see, is yet another ministry of strength. The Spirit of the universe is revealed in some of its manifestations, and the immutability of its Maker gradually soothes every doubt and fear to an eternal sleep.

I think it is never because we think too brightly, in the Christian sense of that word, but because we think too *meanly* of our present existence, that its speedy close wears an especial gloom. It is the testimony of experience indeed, that the habitually joyous spirit, abiding in the world of most cheering thoughts, ever finds the needed strength most surely, welling up within it. That receives confirmation when we consider the tendencies of natural temperament alone. And who finds religious trust so sure a refuge, as he to whom habitual life appears most truly a present heaven? When the song of praise is the natural expression of the prevailing spirit, no change can take away its fervent joy. The peaceful heart must be attended by its own peace

wherever it may be. Ah, thus do we follow Jesus when perils gathered thickly around his path, and the malice of foes was upon the verge of its triumph; when the compassionate heart of that Son of God was directly to be crucified, in the pang it must feel as it bled over the people's blindness and sin. And out of that deep of tribulation comes the voice of prayer, entreating that his own "joy might remain in the disciples' breasts, that their joy might be full."

And thus also have I seen the heart habitually living in the brightest thoughts, itself cheerfully passing away. It was in the very strength of life, in youth's blooming hour, when change had scarcely thrown its thicker shades upon youthful hope; when existence here spread itself out to the eye as a paradise of promise. But the spirit went away in an almost unbroken joy. Not from a weary world was it going. It left a world where weariness had not been known. Yet was it peaceful still. Its peace was only the accomplishment of a great, unchanging law. Nature, life, all things answer to the Spirit. The sunny heart looks over both worlds, only to see in each, the landscapes robed in light. Not from a weary world are such spirits going; a world uncheered by any true light from God, unvisited by any angel feet. The world may only appear a nobler school, life assume a greater value at the hour of their departing. Yet they go in peace. For

behind, and around them, as it were, is the excellent glory whence a great company of God's ministering spirits have always been speaking, and the Father's voice has always been heard. And they can trust the love that hath never failed.

We must gain the brightest view of life, until we feel we are only floating on a sea of love, where the units before us shall be gently lifted up as we are wafted on by the Spirit breath, and our questionings concerning these early departures shall be sufficiently answered. - We shall not speak of them then in the language of our haste, as untimely events. Indeed the true view prompts us to say, alike respecting an early removal, or a continuing life. "It is well." It will not say, it is blessed to die young, as a general truth; but it will believe it is well with the young who are early going. Else, why are they removed, if it be not best for those individual souls? Some ministry in the unseen world may be more perfectly adapted to their peculiar need. They may be carried therefore to more genial spheres, like those who go upon Earth to the more healthful influences of balmy climes. But the same heart believes it is best also for those who stay longer to remain. It is good for *them*, heaven's especial benediction, not to die in youth. No ministries concealed now from view, nothing imagination pictures in its bright thought of the world unseen, can be so well for *them* or why are they permitted

to remain? Life, toilsome, tearful, agonized though it sometimes be, *life* is better than any present removal. For somehow from its change, or its toil, its agonies and tears, if these may be appointed, a blessing is designed to be unfolded, the glories of the unseen world not now so truly bestow. The genuine spirit of trust never stops in any *general* acknowledgments of the benignity of the Father's providence. It must affirm each particular event to be most benignant too. It does not say alone, in lofty phrase, "An Infinite mercy reigns." Because it is Infinite, the particular conviction also comes, that without its notice not a sparrow falls. Nay, it concentrates all these bright thoughts into a burning and shining light, to cheer every present night of grief and tears.

I know one impression occasionally comes, when we attempt to lift our thoughts upward to the lofty doctrine of a sublime Christian trust. It is so remote from the common life of men, especially from the deeper feelings so often absorbing us in the first experience of change, that it appears to be wanting in sympathy with the sorrows of the human heart. It is not thus with any truly *Christian* thought. We read that "Jesus wept," at the moment when he was to reveal a triumph over the power of the grave. It is the special loveliness of the Redeemer's life, that he meets humanity at each stage of its weak-

ness, as well as embodies to our view the serene life of God. Yet while we rejoice in all these beautiful expressions of His sympathy, why should we not also lift our eyes to that great thought in his heart, which could dry every tear? We know the soul fainteth when lives so bright to us, standing in the beauty of their blossoming, have vanished from our sight. We are not speaking in any vain theory of inexperience. We know how we are sometimes prompted to exclaim in the anguish of loneliness,

“ Answer me, burning stars of night !  
Where is the Spirit gone ?

Moments occasionally come when we would summon all mysterious things to answer us. But the voice of the true thought of Jesus always makes one reply.

“ Be thou still ;  
Enough to know is given :  
Clouds, winds, and stars *their* part fulfil,  
Thine is to trust in Heaven !”

And why should we not thus forever trust in the hushed silence of human griefs? What blessed invitations to that trust are spread out before our eyes! What invitations are coming in gracious words to the soul! How calmly nature looks upon the scene, when men are passing away! Who hath not seen her moon walking in brightness when the young and beautiful were

departing, and the tide of joyous life was fast ebbing into the sea of eternity? Or who hath not seen her sun in its rising beauty, or noonday glory, as the last sand of earthly existence fell? And who that witnessed it, hath not felt for the moment an added pang, through the contrast between the brightness of the world without, and the gloom of the clouded mind. Yet why *should* not the sun shine brightly still, and nature put on her garments of beauty? For a deeper reflection tells us no law can be violated; that is to say, no blessed design of providence can be hindered, when these early graves are filled. Why should not the unclouded light of heaven fall upon the tomb, where the early dead are resting? For it is a fitting expression of the true lesson of the providence we are witnessing. Nature smiles over the grave, as around the unbroken circles of human affection. No star is lost from the sky. No ray of light fails. The song of birds doth not cease. All the works of God are the same. Every thing blooms as before, though we are fallen from peace. Whatever is passive to the will of God remains unchanged. Only in man's soul, it is dark. Is it not a sweet expression of the lesson of an equal trust to the human heart, descending from the Heavens, ascending from the Earth, in unnumbered forms? Does it not seem to say, God designs to besiege the soul by this all-encom-

passing host of His ministering spirits, until it should surrender its every thought of gloom?

And the voice of Christianity comes interpreting and confirming these bright lessons of nature. It comes a thousand fold more blessedly, in its words of sympathy; mingling with our griefs as no voice of nature mingles with them, in that Divine Sufferer, whose experience pierced the depths of human trial, so that we verily feel "he knew what was in man." And yet it causes a sun to rise upon the soul more glorious than the sun in the heaven, which may grow dim with age; a sun to which there can be no more light. Here is the teaching which meets us, and deifies us too; which stoops to us, in whatever depth of sadness or unworthiness we may be, with an equal love, and woos us to repose in the Father's bosom; which lifts its voice forever over all the troubled scenes of human life, to say, "Come unto me, ye heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It comes, weeping indeed with those who weep, yet hushing every expression of unmingled sadness, and telling us to sing only the song of victorious trust over the graves of the early departed!

The lesson is ever the same, and ever dear. The only, but alas, the greater difficulty is, to make the bright thoughts that may gleam over us transiently, in the moments of most trustful medi-



tation, profound sentiments, abiding undisturbed in the deep places of the heart. The difficulty remains, to make these occasional recognitions of brighter truths, a perpetual sunlight. And we are sometimes tempted to regard that difficulty with a kind of despondency. Christianity has been proclaiming its bright revelations through long centuries, yet the deep gloom once resting upon the grave before the Redeemer rolled the stone from its door, seems still to settle deep and heavily upon the general feeling of the Christian world. Even the law of death itself, in its general application, we are not yet advanced enough to see in the light of a Christian faith. Ah, much less are we able to explain the special trial its operation occasionally brings, through our abiding confidence in its universal, and unspeakable benignity. It is not in these poor shadowy convictions we often dignify by the name of faith, to help us. They can dry no tears. They have no voice of power to calm the troubled waves of the agitated heart. The lesson we say is one, and the exhortation is also one. Trust not in such convictions to aid you. Live in the thought of God's love until that faith come, which is "an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast."

## The Duty of the Hour.

**JOHN XVII : 4.** "I have finished the work, Thou gavest me to do."

ONE qualification of this declaration must be made, even when it is heard from the lips of Jesus. The work given him to do was not accomplished, in any sense implying a complete fulfilment of the Father's redeeming purpose. Gethsemane, with its agony, then close at hand—the cross and its sacrifice, where Jesus said again, "It is finished." These were the commencement, not the end of the great ministry of mercy. That life and death of the Son of God simply laid the corner stone of the great temple of truth and holiness, one day to be built on sure foundations, even in this misguided and sinful world. It was not raised at that hour, in a christianised and regenerated earth, the abode of good will and peace. Ah ! not yet is it seen, charming all nations by its beauty, constraining mankind to come there and worship. The spiritual kingdom was not established, nor the spiritual King acknowledged then. For instead of being hailed as Messiah, and anointed by the outpouring of gratitude from a redeemed world, he was robed in purple, only in mockery ; he was only crowned with thorns.

It was not the accomplishment of his redeeming purpose that led Jesus to say, "the work given me to do is finished." His holy truth, that new-born child of heaven, was left in its infancy when he ascended. It could only be cradled as in a manger then, because there was no room for it yet in the heart of the world. It was in prophecy, and not in actual fact, the work was said to be finished. Ah! the great work itself was not accomplished when the words of the text fell upon the ear of the disciples, nor was the direct agency of Jesus in its promotion, ended then. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us," is the declaration of Holy Scripture. It is the conviction of the believing heart; the sweet assurance of the soul. For a love like that in Jesus could no more change its nature when it crossed the narrow sea of death, than when it passed into new and varied scenes during its earthly ministry. It became more intense as it ascended into heaven, to sit on the right hand of the Father. Jesus did not breathe his last prayer for sinning men, when he implored forgiveness for the crucifiers. His intercedings did not cease, when his voice of love was heard no more on earth. His ministry was not closed when he vanished from the disciples' sight. As he told them in the conversation whence the text is taken, he went away, to enter upon a mightier agency; to pour out the all-sustaining, the all-illuminating Comforter upon their souls.

His personal ministry was not ended then. I hear his promise of love, "Lo, I am with you alway, unto the end of the world." And I joyously accept the truth it asserts, as more than a promise to his first Apostles. In his unchanging love it is fulfilled to you and me, when in holy fidelity we seek to declare his gospel to the souls he would redeem. I cannot explain the statement away into a cold assertion of the abstract influence of his truth. I echo that promise, not saying merely, *It*—the truth ever liveth—but—*He*, Jesus himself, "ever liveth to make intercession for us."

The work itself was not accomplished, the agency of Jesus was not ended, when he said "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." The text is not thus to be interpreted. It was only that measure of his work, assigned to him while dwelling upon the earth, of which he spoke. It was the duty of that passing hour to which he referred in saying. "It is finished." That greater temple of spiritual truth was not established in the world. But the corner stone *was laid*, on which the apostles and martyrs, the holy everywhere might build, in their earnest laborings. Men were not drawn as yet to the true Messiah. But Calvary, that mountain of most precious revelations, where everything that is lovely in the idea of the Father's infinite benignity, and all that is godlike in a soul, made absolutely one

with God, unite to win us to itself by a kind of omnipotent influence. Calvary *was manifest* to human eyes, and human hearts. That brightest chapter in the book of God's redeeming grace, the key to all beside, was written out so clearly, that whosoever would, might read its teachings of everlasting love. The earthly ministry was finished. How perfectly it was accomplished, let whoever can comprehend the entire obedience the cross expresses, and Gethsemane tells, where the self crucifixion was extended to the wishes of the inmost heart, until there was positively but one will dwelling in that bosom, the will of the Father—Ah, how perfectly accomplished, let him who hath comprehended this in his deep experience venture to declare.

It was the perfect fulfilment of the duty for the hour, that enables Jesus to say, "I have finished the work thou hast given me to do." And here, in the only application they may have to Jesus the ever-living Intercessor, is suggested a joyous thought proving they may be applicable to the disciple as well as to the Master. The fulfilment of the duty of the hour is the only possible accomplishment of the work assigned to undying, and ever-advancing spirits. And could we receive the stream of life always flowing down from Calvary to fill us with the same living self-devotion, that would enable us to say in the same sense as Jesus affirmed it, "the work is finished." Ah!

in a true heart, the work assigned is always *accomplished*, and always *accomplishing*. It is never ended when certain results seem to be produced. Man may gain a lodgement for glorious truths in the world, truths, whose result shall be great redemption. But like the lifting up of the cross by Jesus, that is the beginning, not the end of the ministry he should exert. The work is not ended when a certain period of years has passed, devoted though they were, in singleness of purpose to the truth of God. For the next added moment is a trumpet call to new contests against the evil, or to new ministries of duty and love. What are we saying? What are all added moments after any period of being on earth, or in heaven to be, but new unfoldings of the life and love of God, just as we are told the ministry of intercession in Jesus never ceases. The work may be always *accomplished*, and always *accomplishing*. We can only speak of the period which has passed in noble fidelity, in any declaration like that in the text. And in that respect, at every period of being, from the absolute infancy of the spiritual life, to the highest degree of progress now conceived, or yet conceivable, the soul might so live as to repeat the joyous declaration, "I have finished the work thou hast given me to do."

The entire devotion to the duty of the passing hour, the only accomplishment of the work assigned to man. I cling to this thought for

many reasons, in the experience of life. I cling to it in the first place, as a partial solution of the mystery, whenever youthful and earnest souls have passed, or are passing away. There is a sad scepticism in its teaching, when such events break the circles of our friendship or love. We do not simply mourn the loss of companionship so dear. We mourn over what we term a work unfinished, an untimely end. We image those thus departing by the broken columns; by flowers nipped in their early budding. The feeling almost implies the purposes of heaven have been disappointed. We almost imagine the column thus apparently broken, shall have no glorious top, because we are not permitted now to see its perfect beauty. We almost think the flowers apparently so strangely nipped, never pass into fruit, because that fruit was better fitted for the air of heaven, than for the storms of earth, and therefore withdrawn, to ripen there. A work unfinished! An untimely end to the ministries of life! Not with such lamentations are we to observe these providences of God. Ah! could we receive it as an eternal conviction! Not in any length of years, but in the fulfilment of the duty of the passing hour, is the accomplishment of the work given us to do. The child comes to our arms, and looks up once lovingly into our eye, and flies away. He lays his hand upon the heart, awaking new feelings at his touch, and then he

departs to be seen no more. Yet do not say, O unbelieving man, his work is not accomplished, because his life dawned but to close ! Ah ! as with the blind man healed of old, when Jesus, the instrument of his cure at once departed, the message has been left with the heart, that light remains—although the angel that brought it is no more at our side. It remains, do we say ? It *might* remain, we should rather affirm. And the reason it doth not abide with us, is never the brevity of the ministry, but the slumbering indifference of the soul. Finished is the work given it to do ! It came to reveal just one vision of truth and love to the heart, and it straight returned to heaven. But, ye men of years, ye neglecters of the work assigned in the plain leadings of providence, who sometimes wonder perhaps at the untimely departure, tell us whether any length of years fulfils the work ordained when the Father gave a living soul. Say what is the truth in this respect, ye who know in the judgment of conscience that talents have been buried in the earth ; that instead of standing now with hearts throbbing in sympathy with the love of Jesus, ye are all greatly indifferent to the wail of human woe, or the perdition of human sinfulness. How many feel that what we call the untimely death of youth or infancy would have been infinitely better than this lengthening out of life, when as the result of all, we can only bend in the



pang of deep reproach for our infidelity. There *are* untimely departings of the children of men, as far as human eyes can perceive, to be seen all around us in the experience of life. They are not untimely on account of the period of being when they occur, but on account of the unfaithfulness of the soul. And the departing of those of many years is sometimes more untimely in this respect by a thousand fold, than that of the young by any possibility could be. There is no period when such can die that is not untimely. Who has not felt in his experience, that few departures of his fellow beings can be regarded like those of the young? How often with all beside there is a remembrance of some duty unperformed, no broad mantle of charity can altogether conceal. These are the broken columns which seem to stand up before me as images of woe. The sting of death, in personal experience, or in the records of human memory, the *sting* of death, is sin. I throw aside all considerations respecting the number of the years, when I ask whether the work assigned has been accomplished. That only sting is never present, when the self-sacrificing and devoted depart, though it be in the promise of youthful days. The fidelity which filled the hour with kindly feelings and beneficent deeds. It is the strength of that which determines our age in the sight of heaven. The work of the hour accomplished! Ah! saith Jesus at the judgment by his truth and love,

Hast thou been faithful in a few things, in thine appointed day? And the answer to that, heralds the glad approval, "enter into the joy of thy Lord."

Abounding consolations are here in what we often so recklessly call an untimely departure from present life. And yet another thought the text suggests, when we pursue its application to every earnest and faithful soul. Its work is finished whenever it goes. And yet for all such, as with Jesus, may we not humbly say, it has not ended, nor has it approximated its close, when it vanishes from our eyes. Possibly life may just begin in a glorious unfolding of its energies, when we say in ordinary speech it closes. When Jesus declares his departure from the world shall be the commencement of a mightier agency, I seem to hear one bright and beautiful hint concerning the future awaiting every earnest soul; the ministries of love from those once closely connected in present existence. Possibly they may only begin in the noblest sense, when the earthly ministry is ended. Is it not a thought in harmony with a universe where the winds are God's angels, to suppose the departed when entering upon a truer vision and an intenser life, may whisper still to the souls, to which they once loved to speak? May they not bring the strength of the Comforter to those prepared to hear? And the whisper of a spirit thus exalted, *may be* a nobler ministry than

the most earnest word from any living lips. Ah! the loving and the true, taken from the contests against sin upon the earth, may only be standing more nearly to the throne, to bear thence to those remaining in the warfare, a diviner wisdom, to become their guide, and a godlike energy, to be their inspiration. May they not all cast their mantles upon us when they ascend, so that the departure of the faithful, the despair of hastily judging men, is an investing of those remaining with new robes of power?

A noble devotion to the passing hour is the only accomplishment of the work given man to do. I cling to this thought also, as suggesting the great doctrine of life; impressing its most earnest call, intimating one of its greatest hopes. Here appears the deep meaning of that urgent entreaty, "Now is the accepted time,"—and of every similar admonition to present fidelity. It is not well to interpret them as simply saying, improve this call of love, lest none other should be made. For that may leave out of sight the most important thought. Every present hour brings its duty, and now only can it indeed be done. There can be no other accepted time for that particular service. For the next moment brings *its* duty also, demanding the full measure of human power. And no space seems to remain for any compensation for the period lost. Ah! the great doctrine of life's responsibility is unfolded here in all its im-

pressiveness, enforcing the word "now," with an almost terrible earnestness. We see what a great thing it is to *fulfil* the work given us to do. And we perceive the force of the teaching in the consciousness more or less distinct in every heart, that we are not clothed with any worthy proportion of the life and power which might have been our own at the present hour. I am overcome by temptations still, through past unfaithfulness, I might long ago have vanquished. I speak in feebleness, in my half cultivated being, when I might have pleaded for truth perhaps with a victorious power. I am still a child, when I should have been a man. I am stumbling at the commencement of the way, when I might have been treading the path far up the height of virtue, with firm and steady feet. Thou man! bowed down as thou must be in moments of reflection by thoughts like these, so redeem coming hours in remembrance of this dread admonition, that nothing more of bitterness may be added to these reproaching memories.

The admonition of life, and the hope of life also, as we said, are here. The responsibility of being almost overwhelms us with awe, as it is declared in the teaching of Jesus. But it is distributed into the minuter works <sup>which</sup> the passing hours may bring, and weak humanity may be strengthened to meet it all. We are not to think of the greater duties of future days. We are to meet the

comparatively little service of the passing time. And, as one travelling in the thickest mist, always finds the *next step* to be taken is clearly seen, so shall it be in the leadings of God's providence. What though fearful sacrifices may hereafter be demanded? I shall thus be gradually led up the mount of sacrifice, and the final step will be easy as any in the path which conducted me there. The hope of life is here; the hope of fulfilling the responsibility otherwise appalling us by its greatness. Each successive duty may be bravely met. The dread responsibility may be gloriously borne. The tide of life may roll on, swollen by the contributions of every successive hour. And triumphantly, yet in humble remembrance of the strength whereby he lives, man might ever say, "I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; I have finished the work given me to do."

And why may we not take the declaration of the text then to our hearts, in the simple yet grand application it may have to every child of our race? The full devotion of heart to the duty of the hour is the only accomplishment of our work. Every other interpretation we instantly feel must involve an absurdity. God's work is never finished, thanks be forever given! All the labors of the long line of faithful servants from eldest time are only steps in His great plan of

mercy. His glorious design of love "was, and is, and is to come." What appears most majestic in accomplishment in human endeavours, may have only as great a relation to the blessed whole, as the lily of the field, to this boundless universe of beauty. To what results can we turn in any such comparison? The labor of long generations only inscribes one single added word, we might say, in that book of God's love, which is to be unfolded to the ages as they pass. The ministry of Jesus, all-glorious though it were, the hope of earth, the joy of heaven, that is but a single page in this great volume of infinite mercy. And what new revelations of redeeming love shall beam from these great manifestations in the long periods of an eternal progress! God's work is never finished. And therefore, man's action, thanks be also given, can never end. It is not closed by any hasty course of years, even when continuing through the longest day of earthly being, not in these interpretations can the text be applied, it is needless to repeat. Yet it has a sure and joyful application when referred to the feeble endeavours, and the brief workings of man. The duty of the hour can be met. The work of this infancy can be accomplished, although in its utmost fullness it must be only a simple prelude to the nobler labor of the manhood.

The devotion of heart to the duty of the hour is

the accomplishment of our work. Ah ! I question nothing respecting the limitations of present being when I am truly wise. "Are there not twelve hours in the day ?" said Jesus on one occasion, when the disciples endeavoured to deter him from returning to Judea, by intimations of danger, "Are there not twelve hours in the day ? Work while the day lasts." Every man has an immortality until his work is done. The twelve hours of his appointed day shall come. Let him work while the day lasts. No oppositions of men could bring Jesus to the cross, until the seeds of truth had been deeply planted in the world. Nothing can harm the faithful servant until his allotted work is done. Let him work while the day lasts. Ah ! we know it is as nothing, we are enabled to accomplish. We can only speak of our endeavours in the prostration of humility, in connection with the declaration of the text when applied to the redeeming agency of Jesus. In this wide ocean of sorrow and sin, God is building up an abode of truth, a dwelling-place of love, which shall rise at last above all the waves. And man's action in his utmost energy, is like the work of the single insect, deep in the sea, which adds one grain to the rock, whereon fertile isles eventually shall rest. Yet let him come with that contribution towards the fulfilment of the purposes of God's love. "Work while the day lasts," and

although the labor be humble and the time be short, in the spirit of its performance, shall be found a sympathy full and free with the heart of Jesus himself. And man can know no better hope.



## Enduring Life.

II CORINTHIANS, iv : 18. "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

"THE things which are seen, are temporal." Doubtless there are *moments* of deep experience in the history of most men, when this is felt as an overwhelming conviction. It stirs no fear in ordinary life. But in the suddenness of change it rushes into the heart with a power that cannot need, and may scarcely bear to hear, any feeble words of man endeavouring to give it impressiveness. The vivid comparisons of the scripture illustrating the fleetingness of the things that are seen, comparing them in their quick flight to the morning cloud, and the early dew, almost appear to fail as images of our actual feeling. The strong man perhaps, before the company of friends, hastening with winged feet, can gather around him, bows his head and passes away. The child, fair as the morning flower, bright as morn itself in the radiance of infant joy, droops before the night-fall. It may be an age of experience indeed, yet only as a moment of time, and the voice full of glee is forever still. How do any peculiar illustrations of this truth, which

wear a strangeness like that of the miracle, compelling attention, but which are still known to be only peculiar manifestations of a universal law, how do they sometimes bring dread shudderings of conviction for the hour into the heart? The mother goes noiselessly, to listen more intently to the breath of her sleeping child, lest disease may steal upon it unperceived. The friend looks inquiringly into the face of friends, to see whether any deceitful line of disease enters into the flush upon the cheek, he had hailed as the promise of health. At some moments of such impressions the man almost trembles while he steps, lest the ground suddenly fail beneath his feet. The silent air seems to be bearing forward invisible arrows of disease in a noiseless flight; unperceived until they are fixed within our own breasts, or what is a deeper dread, in the heart of friend or child. Sometimes providence preaches this truth until man believes and trembles. And ah! no deepest impression in such occasional moments of fear, though it were to make men dread surrendering themselves to sleep lest there be no more waking, though many thoughts were mingled with it a true heart must condemn, no such shuddering impression could overstate the truth that "the things which are seen are temporal." We hail their coming, rising as every welcome gift comes, bright as morning beaming over the sea, we hail their coming as if they

should remain. But every morning heralds the succeeding night. Every birth, in one point of view, *foretells* another death. We look in one direction, and a numberless host of forms and beings are springing into life forever, and hastening onward with bounding feet. We turn and follow them, and the whole host is only marching in one funeral procession to the grave. "For the things which are *seen*, are temporal."

And now we ask, what is the inference from this thought? *Are* the things which are seen so fleeting? Then happy is he, exclaim a multitude of voices in the first moment's thought, who has learned in a literal sense to look not at the things which are seen. Men accept it as consolation when one passes away to whom they were not united in deepest love, that their hearts were no more joined to his. Love not your child so well, say the surrounding world, for every drop in the cup of present affection may only be changed into a fount of bitterness, to swell the flood of sorrow. Chasten these strong currents of affection which seem to sweep the whole energy of feeling towards one cherished object. It is better to be partially weaned now, though it be a self-denial, than incur this peril of a crucifixion. And thus an exhortation is often heard, whose complete statement would seem to call it wisdom never to enter so earnestly into the scenes of the world, because they may all be speedily changed; never to

love so deeply, lest the depth of present love become an occasion of future and abiding woe.

The true inference we apprehend, is just the reverse. The lesson is precisely opposite to this. The fleetingness of the things that are seen, instead of being a reason why we should look at them no more, is the precise reason why we should live in them with a deeper devotion. For through an intenser life in the things that are seen, do we look most truly at the things that are *not* seen and eternal. This is the way of joy while they remain, and what seems mysterious perhaps, yet is strictly true, it is the chosen way of preparation for their departure.

Are the things that are seen so fleeting? Therefore live in them with deeper devotion. Clearly, thus must be the way alike of wisdom, and of joy, while they remain. Is there reason to think the angel may quickly depart? I can lose no hour of his stay. I can waste no moment then, through failure to consider and learn his message. He came directly from the Father to nestle awhile in my arms in his infant weakness. He had a heavenly commission. His simple look could stir the deep things of the soul, and proved he was sent to minister to its deepest life. And whatever we feel to be a ministering spirit, in its power to move us, be it reverently said, we should regard with the rapt attention men imagine they should give to an actual Redeemer, were such a

visitant in our midst. No word of his lips could we consent to lose. No act could we willingly permit to pass unobserved. No single look would we spare. We long to know every part of his message before he shall ascend from our view. Is it not so with every angel that cometh? I would know his every expression, his slightest teaching. Does the thought that he may speedily depart, make me almost imagine he is already moving his wings to soar away? I should only turn with an earnestness deep as any prayer upon the bended knee, to live in a life so fleeting, while it may continue. I cannot grieve the Spirit speaking now, by imaginings concerning the nature of its ministries in future years. Give me this day my daily bread. Give me the cup of joy now offered to the lips. Listen to the teachings of the hour with a devotion so absorbing during their stay, that their fleetingness is partially forgotten in the earnest love of the heart.

But we pass from this consideration to dwell upon the other thought, apparently so false, yet so strictly true, that the deepest life in the things that are seen is the chosen preparation for their departure. We say this thought apparently so false, because it contradicts the usual modes of human speech. And yet there is one sense in which it instantly appears to be true. The most devoted clinging in love to every act and look of Jesus for example, though it might seem at first

only to leave the disciples deeper mourners, was their living baptism with the same spirit. The inward power which triumphed in him, came thus to them as the Comforter, with all its revelations of truth and peace. Thus did the joy of Jesus "remain in them, and their joy was full." If a paternal providence reign, then must it be with everlasting ministering to the heart of man. If no sparrow falleth without the Father, no blessing can pass away, until its use may have prepared for its departure. All the ministering spirits of God, like the prophet of old, may leave their mantles behind them when they ascend. Through the fullest reception of their message, must the Comforter always enter. Although the way should appear altogether a mystery, would it not seem a simple truth which a living faith could scarcely fail to believe, that a devotion to the teacher which made the heart one with his; a devotion which unfolded the fulness of his message, was the best preparation for his loss?

It is not wholly mystery. How sweetly is its confirmation written in the deep experience of a thousand hearts! How surely for instance do all hours of truest affection when we were most deeply absorbed with the loss, afterward come as the purest consolation! The seasons of select joy, whose expectation lighted up the whole day of most weary toil, whose loss might appear a cause of mourning beyond alleviation, these,

these, send forth in remembrance perennial springs of peace. Is it not thus in living experience? The first thought may say, their absence will bring the deepest night. But soon the smile of a child rises in memory as a cheering star. And every hour of joy, every expression of gladness, every moment of its innocent mirth, is another and yet another light to bless us. If those remembrances be many, the whole firmament of our thought is soon filled with their serene and soothing beams. At first they may indeed only bring thoughts of sadness, until the garden of former delight becomes as with Jesus, the place of keenest agony. We say with him, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But a little time, and they are happy remembrances, blessed angels. And as they crowd upon the mind, they seem as a legion for number, angels indeed, comforting, strengthening thoughts which cannot die, abiding within the soul as their everlasting home. Ah! all secret things of true feeling are then revealed. How brightly do incidents which appeared the simplest, scarcely observed when they occurred and speedily forgotten, through the feeling filling every new hour with some new source of pleasure, how brightly they then revive with a mighty influence! The little event that was "sown in weakness" is then "raised in power." The little act, performed in that fulness of feeling which never pauses to mark its particular ex-

pressions and note them in the memory, that little seed grows into a great tree under whose branches we may rest. It is a blessed providence which thus gathers up the fragments, things unremembered until the hour of loss, and makes even these an almost satisfying feast, in what before appeared a wilderness.

And observe what has reference to our special point, it is only the hours of most devoted love, the seasons when the heart's feeling was most intense, that recur so brightly. It is only what men hastily call the great causes of mourning which can appear as comforters. All times when the heart was divided, when we failed to yield ourselves to the enjoyment of God's darling gifts ! They brought little happiness while they were continued. They leave no peace behind them when they have passed. These angel-remembrances only come when there has been an absorbing devotion of the heart. And 'in precise proportion to its depth will their power and their brightness be ! Is it not true that the deepest life in the things that are seen is the chosen preparation for their departure ? Let the experience of deeply living hearts answer.

And the heart *answers* yet *again* as we penetrate more closely into its intimate experience. The truth is confirmed by another course of reflections still. What after all is the really abiding bitterness of sorrow ? What is the sting of grief ?



It is not the thought of bereavement simply, though we are bereft of whatsoever constituted the chief beauty of present existence, the voice of gladness sounding like the music of heaven in our earthly homes. It is not the loneliness of life merely, though it sometimes appears as if we were indeed alone on this side of the grave. It is not the deep trial of a heart which might gladly have gone to the tomb in its love, with all its imperfections thick upon it, could that have availed to save its object. It is not in these. But it is in the remembrance of hours when the departed gift was neglected. It is the recollection of hours when an act of impatience or injustice caused a shade of sorrow to come over the countenance now seen no more. Here are the tormentings of human griefs. These things make conscience come forth in robes of judgment when we stand by the grave, adding the torture of remorse to the pain of sorrow. The deep regret is never for the depth of the love. Ah no! It is forever for the want of a deeper devotion of heart; the want causing us to be untrue to the ministering spirit at our side. It is the grieved look we imagine it casting upon us for such neglect, which like that of Jesus to Peter, sends us away in the bitterness of weeping. There is no other worm which doth not die. Here alone is the cause which can make the places full of associations with the departed, places of real agony. But

when the heart has been true, such spots are hallowed to the soul ; filled with ministries to give it peace. Every place once blessed by any living joy becomes sacred forevermore. A better light seems to visit it than beams upon other scenes. It is a shrine whither we love most to journey. Truly we are mysteriously made, when from that which most proves the depth of the loss, we derive the elements of most abiding peace.

One confirmation more yet remains of the same general thought. Only to the more devoted life in the relationship of time, can come the assured hope of those everlasting re-unions for which bereaved affection always sighs. What unions may remain, interrupted indeed, but never severed ? What affections may remain unchilled by the cold grave, indestructible by the change of death ? Not those which only moved the surface of the heart, feeling, never penetrating its profoundest depths. Not those which absence in this world might chill and destroy ! Thou hast no right to hope that aught save a friendship pure and deep, a union of heart in the profoundest sympathies of his being, can survive the decays of time, or pass into that spiritual world where the spiritual and immortal may live. Thou hast no right to hope the last great change shall leave unimpaired what any present change might have power to kill. Hope for no re-unions, when there hath never been a living union here. Death may

doubtless sound an eternal knell to many apparent friendships. But a bond like that uniting the beloved disciple to his Lord, all relationships of disinterested feeling and holy sympathy, whatsoever draws power and depth from the fathomless affections of the human heart, whatsoever *liveth*, that humanity may hope shall never die. Ah! if there be angelic ministries permitted the beloved departed, if they may bring blessed but unseen influences to the loved who remain, may it not be that through the channels of deepest affection alone, they may flow? These bonds of the heart may constitute the electric communication between earth and heaven whereby light and life may be transmitted to saddened breasts. But if that conjecture seem too bold, we know that no re-union shall be, save when the earthly relationship hath woven sympathies deep as the heart, and enduring as its love.

Live in the things that are seen with profound devotion of heart, and you gain the chosen preparation for their departure. Only one perversion of the position can be feared, and that is too obvious to mislead. There may be an *unwise* devotion to the relationships of present being, but there can be none too *deep*. The difference between a true child of God living most for heaven, and the mere child of the earth, does not consist in this. That one concentrates all thought upon the things that are seen, and the other ap-

pear to regard them not. To a merely superficial view, each might seem alike absorbed. But one lives for a selfish end. The other lives in the everlasting affections, all fleeting incidents of life may quicken. And precisely because he desires to have them glow and burn with an immortal flame, will he listen most intently to each messenger of God's providence as it hurries by. Ah! the experience of change we are told should teach the nothingness of all things seen! In one sense that is true. In another, the lesson is precisely the reverse. We might never know what mighty things these fleeting events and relationships may be, unless change came to teach us. Then we see what everlasting affections they may call into being. In one sense life may never appear so valuable as by the grave of a fond earthly hope. Then we see what everlasting messages may have come, through the presence of angels of providence that only appeared to vanish. Then we see what eternal lessons may be gained through a true life in the things of time. Then we see that the most intent devotion to each particle of its teaching, the most fervent affection in its rapidly passing relationships were the keys to unlock the immortal treasure it would bring. Say not as many say, these quickly passing forms are only as bubbles appearing a moment upon the sea, to be broken by the next ripple over its surface! In these bubbles, seen only for the instant, great laws

of nature are manifest, which span the universe in their embrace. So in these quickly vanishing bonds of earthly life may be found the elements of all that may endure and shine forever. These transient scenes may call into action an unfathomable heart. They are not clad in a gloomy pall by these ministries of change, when we regard them wisely. They are transfigured forevermore.

We speak of the fleetingness of these fond relationships, only to impress the exhortation to live in them more fervently while they remain. When shall we learn that true harmony in the Father's providence, a mistaken thought has obscured? When shall we learn that the profoundest life in the world that is, must be the chosen preparation for the world to come! When shall we learn that he who would inherit the bright joys of pure affections in immortal scenes, must drink most deeply of the cup of joy all true unions of the heart may here offer to his lips! He who is prepared to gain the world to come, hath this world also in blest possession. The true admonition from all opening graves is ever the same. The most thrilling lessons of uncertainty have the same great meaning. They do not say, love the less in the bonds of present being. They only say, love the more. If the things that are seen are fleeting, gather all the treasures of instruction in these quickly flying hours with profound earn-

estness of heart. They bring thus their utmost joy while they stay. And the depth of your devotion will unfold the sustaining strength when they shall have vanished. Live in the things that are seen with a love as deep as if they were eternal, and through that *deep love* the eternal things shall come forth from the very grave of the objects of time, with an unfailing power to console.

## The Law of Consolation.

MATTHEW x : 19. "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how, or what ye shall speak : for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak."

THESE were words of inexpressible hope. Jesus was sending the apostles into a ministry encompassed with perils. In its fulfilment, they would be brought before governors and kings, and delivered up to councils for punishment. Bitter scorn and cruel scourgings, fierce and relentless persecutions in every form awaited them. They would be as sheep in the midst of wolves. No fears in the apostles' breasts could have magnified the dangers of their appointed ministry, beyond the actual representation in the words of the Redeemer. Yet no anxiety was to be permitted for one instant to distract their minds, and thus prevent an absolute devotion of thought and feeling to their special work. For in this entire, unreserved concentration of the heart, would be found the only possible preparation for every exigency of the life. If they lived with a single eye to the truth, their whole body must be filled with light. Then it would not be they who spoke, but rather the truth, speaking in them, and as it were instinctively suggesting an answer of more than human wisdom, in every moment of diffi-

culty or trial. As the full fountain sends an abundant stream into every channel opened for its waters, so that all-pervading spirit of truth must illuminate every incident in each passing hour. It would be with the disciple as with the Master. The garment's hem might not be touched, and the healing virtue, needful for the hour, fail to flow. What defence could have been so perfect, as the simple manifestation of the Redeemer's spirit, causing the rude soldiery to fall backward to the ground in awe, through its own inherent majesty. And though it might be unavailing, what answer could that spirit give, except the reply of purest wisdom and divinest love ! A soul thus true, must make the moments of bitterest opposition. the times of an especial manifestation of its own absolute truthfulness. And the cross, the last evil man could inflict, would become its enduring crown.

I regard the text as the application of a universal principle to a particular case. It indicates the sublime law which reigns throughout the entire world of human feeling and human experience ; the divine law, whose operation brings an unflinching strength and life to every soul obedient to its commandment, in every hour of need .

It is one chief error of the world, that it lives with too much reference to particular incidents in human experience ; in forgetfulness of that great principle which alone can lead to any effectual



preparation, alike for the ordinary duty, and the most extraordinary and overwhelming change. We sleep until the bridegroom comes; and then, when the midnight of trial overshadows us, we expect the lamp of trust will brightly burn in a previously untrusting heart. Man hopes to meet the exigencies of existence, the hours testing most severely the spirit's strength, by something beside the preparation of habitual life. And he is very slow to learn, that the habitually prepared life alone can fill the heart with angels, to be ministers of strength in all its agonies. It is a great truth, that we can only *grow* into sympathy with any exalted thought, or holy feeling. We cannot go beyond this living experience. Jesus says, "he that climbeth up some other way, is a thief and a robber." We must go in by the door, the gate of life. In sympathy of feeling, forgetful of this unchanging law, we may seek to impart some bright view of providence, to a soul never moved by any deep spirit of trust and love. It is like an expectation that one may see the glorious prospect from the mountain's top, when he is still sitting in the caves of the earth. He may contemplate that blessed thought. But in a mind so different, it is like the plant nursed in the heart, suddenly exposed to wintry cold. Separated from the spirit which gave it birth, where it would be springing up as an instinctive persuasion of the heart, it instantly perishes, like

the flower torn from its parent stem. It is long indeed, before the believing heart penetrates to the deeper treasures of strength and consolation in the truth to which it clings. It is long before the heart can become its fixed dwelling place; its home. And when the truth has long been there, a household thought, it shall wear a new expression still, in every new experience. In a new perception of the depth of his love in the last interview with the disciples, Jesus called the requisition "to love one another," a *new* commandment. It had new meaning to his burning heart. And if the familiar faith conceal so long its deepest teachings, what can these stranger-thoughts do to bless us? We may strive to climb up some other way. But we cannot outrun these living experiences.

Life continually illustrates the principle we are contemplating. We cite again the instance we have already named; the experience of the days of grief. What means the lamentation in so many sorrowful houses, "no man really speaks to my sadness?" What means the fact that religion's voice is often powerless to soothe? What mean these things but this fearful truth, that when the lamps are not daily fed by the continual devotion in the daily life, no ministry of earth or heaven will make them burn. The ministries of human sympathy in sorrowing hours, may scarcely hope to communicate truths entirely un-

known before. They must rather aim to recall comparatively forgotten thoughts into clearer view. And the sunlight of heaven falls vainly upon the barren rock. If the heart be ordained unto darkness in the prevailing spirit of its life, only the deep change of that spirit itself can set aside the decree. We may catch the words which are the true expression of a trusting soul, and repeat them with our lips, as the foolish virgins went and knocked. Yet the heart will not find its rest. The tongue may never cease this idle calling for admittance to the marriage. Yet the door will still be shut. The most overwhelming woe indeed is not so sad, as this vain call for help, to which the unbending law of life must give a perpetual denial. It is Gethsemane, without the strengthening angel.

But we turn in joy to the fact, that the opposite illustrations of the truth may be as bright, as this is fearful. It is wonderful, to see how all things come to the aid of the faithful hearts as one who is increasing in physical strength, through the labors of life, can work with a stronger arm, every hour, so the soul continually acts in the accumulated might of every moment of its experience. All the observation and skill of years are present to aid the artizan, in each new work he may attempt. And thus every bright thought of precious years brings its lamp, when we are called to meet the bridegroom. No breathing of prayer

fails then to bring its answer of grace. It may have been heard by no ear. It may have been the silent breath of the Spirit, in the secret place, where only the Father seeth. But how surely he rewards us openly, in the energy and might thus imparted to the heart. All these secret aspirations, these wooings of pure desire, reveal themselves in the great result, like the hidden springs which feed earth's gushing fountains. And especially will this be true in the most trying hours. For whatsoever calls for the deepest courage and endurance of the soul, of course must unveil most perfectly its hidden strength.

I look upon those fearful calamities whose occurrence occasionally appals us, with these thoughts in my view.\* That was a scene of inconceivable horror, when those who sat in glad society, or who commenced with happy thoughts of homes so near, after long wanderings, were suddenly exposed to a destruction so terrible. And what could bear those sufferers up in that dreadful hour? Not the despair the moment would bring, when the inevitable fate was seen. Not the thoughts which had been strangers to the

\* This Sermon was first preached on the Sunday immediately after the destruction of the Steamboat Lexington, by fire, when Dr. Follen lost his life. The writer has been pleased to find, in the record of one of the conversations in the Memoir of Dr. Follen, a recognition of the same principle it was the design of this discourse to unfold.

heart in other days, and whose voice it did not know. Only one ministry could be effectual then; the deep sentiment of habitual life, appearing in its power, to declare what the sufferer should do and speak. It was the combined result of the discipline of previous years, coming forth as we may see it in some who pass away in their homes; revealing a power unsuspected before; causing them to put on the angel, as they put off the body. We know not how many of those suddenly stricken ones found it thus triumphant. But one noble spirit was there, prepared, as few in the world may be found, for the most appalling vicissitude. One was there, whose entire life seemed a pure devotion to what he deemed the truth of God; one was there, who had the martyr-spirit to leave home and native land, to peril "earthly prospects and present reputation, through his love of freedom, and of right. And would it not be given in that hour to such a heart, what it should speak and do? We know not how to spare spirits so brave and true, from a world needing their ministry so deeply. And yet, for that very reason, we can view their departure with serenest trust. For what may have been to some in that hour, as a devouring flame, must have been to him a chariot of fire, prepared for his ascension.

Indeed, life continually presents one great alternative to the human heart. It *may* be a continued triumph, wherein it shall be given in every

hour what we are to speak and do. Or it *must* be, to some extent at least, a sorrowful failure; perhaps, an almost rayless gloom. It may be a perpetual victory. It is a joyful promise, that "as our days, so our strength shall be." And its complete fulfilment cannot fail, when men meet the great condition on which it rests. For this great providence of God must be so perfectly beneficent, that it can never lay any burden upon its children, they might not have been altogether ready to bear, through fidelity to its previous instructions. It is a Father's providence. It never demands a manly work, from those who might not have had the strength of men. With what an unspeakable benignity it must lead onward every faithful heart. It demands no light service in its eternal law of responsibility. But the inexpressible tenderness of the deepest human love, could not make the service bear such exact relations to the growing strength, at every step of progress. It proposes a work to every living heart, not only becoming greater in each successive year of present being, but through the endless ages of its eternal existence. And it endows us with an eternally unfolding nature, whose immortal energies may yet accomplish almost godlike works, as we now may meet the simpler duty of the present hour. And the gradually increasing work, is the divinely adapted ministry to unfold this immortal energy; just as the increased duties of ear-

Her years are the discipline to make us men. A ray of heavenly light falls directly upon the whole sphere of human duty, when this thought is accepted in a lowly and earnest faith. I see how strength may come according to our day, by a beneficent law of an unchanging providence. Scenes of apparent gloom, days of grief and tears, all that is bitter and fearful in experience, as well as all that is joyous, may share the blessing of the same benignant law. Great responsibilities may seem to rise before the soul, as it looks onward to the future. But fidelity in previous discipline, shall tell it what to do and to speak. Out of its previous life shall come its all-sufficient aid. Great sacrifices may be before it. But the way shall be made smooth at each step of advance towards a self-sacrifice, pure as the devotion of the Redeemer's Cross. Why do we lament over the scenes where faithful hearts are called to sadness, or martyr-souls are led to suffering? There can be no visitation the *faithful* soul may not bravely meet. Its tears shall all be wiped away as they flow. Its martyr-suffering shall be its especial triumph. The great words of hope spoken by Jesus himself to the first Apostles, may be applied to every faithful heart in all their promise. Over all the power of the enemy, in whatever form his attacks may come, and through all its experiences of trial, it may walk with unfaltering feet towards its enduring rest.

Life may be one continued, and ever brightening triumph. Or it *must* be, miserable failure. Possibly it may be an almost cheerless gloom. It is the faithful soul, to whom it shall be given what to do and to speak in every hour. There are no promises for the unfaithful hearts, either in the days of ordinary duty, or in the moments of extraordinary change. Indeed, there is no conviction more overwhelming, than the thought that the unprepared heart must forever fail. Here we stand, called to manly works, but with only an infant strength, through previous infidelity. Here we are in maturer years, with dwarfed and undeveloped souls; amidst glorious teachings in the Father's providence, almost hidden from our childish eyes; amidst a great company of angels, whose voice we might have heard, whose messages we might have learned, but whose instructions we *are* not sufficiently advanced to hear. Do not speak of failure, only in the days of peculiar trial? Each day is failure, from morning dawn to evening shade. I look upon nature with an undeveloped mind, and how few of its teachings can open themselves to me? I gaze upon life as it rolls on, with its manifold changes, its ever-varying instructions. But the superficial mind can only attain a superficial thought; unconscious of the profound wisdom and truth lying beneath every thing it sees. We are like the unsympathising and heedless hearts, who gazed



upon the Redeemer's countenance, and listened to his word, yet had no eyes to see, and no ears to hear. What truth more humiliating than this, that life may be all imbecility and failure, although we suspect it not; that no single duty of life's passing years may be fully met, and no single instruction truly apprehended; that in every instant we are only weighed in the balance of an unerring judgment, to be found wanting forever more. And if life's ordinary service may be a constant failure, through unfaithfulness of heart, what can its exigencies be, when noblest spirits are almost shaken, when the soul of the Redeemer experienced an hour of agony? We need not wonder, when we find religion is often powerless, in sorrowing hearts, and sorrowing homes. It is the deepest sadness to every heart of sympathy. Yet no mystery is there. This night of the darkened soul comes by a law as sure, as that which brings the night in the world of nature. What grief it is, to find hearts sometimes overborne by calamities, which could have been brushed away like the dew before the feet of a living man! What greater grief it is, to find them desolate in heavier calamities still, and to feel no ministry of fervent love can really open the door, their own unfaithfulness has shut. In scenes where Jesus wept, in moments when the cry for help ascended from his purely trusting soul, when he laid prostrate in agony of spirit, in seasons when the

exclamation, "why hast thou forsaken me," might be heard from most truly believing lips, what can be the portion of those who know nothing of their faith and trust, but an almost starless gloom?

There is a sublime wisdom in one particular in the Redeemer's teaching we are peculiarly slow to learn. We scarcely apprehend the state of which he speaks, in those grand declarations forbidding anxieties for the morrow, condemning all deeper thoughtfulness concerning the possible, or even the certain changes of future days; seeming almost as a rebuke to any questioning respecting the results of any present action, in his pressing injunction to seek only to be true in the passing moment, leaving the morrow to take thought for itself. They transcend so greatly our spiritual condition, that to some they almost appear to justify a reckless of thought and feeling, they know not how to reconcile with wisdom. It is only another of the thousand proofs, that what may be wisdom with men, is foolishness with God; and that what may be foolishness with men, is the wisdom of God. Human wisdom may counsel the low prudence, which has respect mainly to special exigencies in the course of life. A divine wisdom may leave them comparatively out of view, in that greater preparation of the ruling spirit of the life, which must comprehend all particulars within its wide embrace. It is the

same wisdom which appears in every thing Jesus teaches concerning the spiritual life. Man's poor thought often leads him to endeavour to develope particular traits of virtue, to meet certain spheres of action, when there is no deeper regeneration of the inward life. The word of Jesus says, out of the changed mind all these things shall come, naturally as the golden fruits upon the living tree. The only noble prudence in every particular, is to live with absolute devotedness in the universal, and all-comprehending spirit. Then the truth becomes one with the life itself, acting whenever we may act, speaking when we may speak. It is not as an angel occasionally present, but the indwelling comforter, never more to leave his chosen temples. In a singleness of heart thus perfect, why should we question what the morrow may bring? Why should we fear, if we may be brought before governors and kings, by the persecutions of man? Why should we tremble at the possibility of appalling vicissitudes, which may throw a gloom over other years; or fear they may not be bravely met, however and whenever they may come? An all-sufficient grace shall visit us by an eternal law of an unchanging God. "It shall be given thee in that hour, what thou shalt do, and what thou shalt speak."

## The Resurrection and the Life.

**COLOSSIANS, III: 1.** "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above."

THERE is one peculiar festival, consecrated by a majority of Christian believers to a celebration of the Redeemer's resurrection. They not only recur to the wondrous fact with gladness ever, but set apart one day of separate joy, for its special commemoration. Once at least in the year, a great host of believing hearts would journey together in feeling to see the place where the Lord lay, to meditate upon the deserted tomb, to gather up in joyful remembrance the lessons of hope thus inspired, to follow him with a brightening faith in the path of his ascension.

It is a holy pilgrimage. It may be performed silently, in the secrecy of the heart, with no sign to attract the world's eye, or with rejoicings in the sacred temple. It may have no resemblance to those strange manifestations of sincere, yet blind enthusiasm, in former days, when men rushed on with arms in their hands, to redeem the holy sepulchre from the power of the infidel. But how infinitely more beautiful is it in the sight of heaven! It is a pure crusade of faith and love, whose origin was sacred, and whose

effect may be indeed redeeming. What blessed confirmations of our faith may come as we gather there in lowly, glad meditations! What *varied* confirmations are these, adapted to meet all peculiarities of thought and feeling! Some there are for example, who are troubled by the operation of this great law of death as it appears to our senses; those who long for some visible proof that man may yet live when the eye is fixed in deathly stillness, when no trace of the living spirit can any more be found, and decay commences its rapid work upon the once active frame, and all that is *seen* only speaks of destruction. Let such hearts come and meditate. And when we admit the substantial truthfulness of the record, there is just the ministry they need, to suggest a solution of their difficulties. They may touch the print of the nails. They may put their hands into the side. They find an evidence *addressed* to the senses even, assuring them the grave is not the gate of destruction, but of glory. They see it is like the door of entrance to the splendour and joy of the marriage feast, as imaged in the parables of Jesus. To those without, all may appear frowning and dark. To those within, it is illuminate and bright forever.

The hearts also that desire upon any other ground to have a wonderful attestation of the doctrine of immortality whereon to repose, may come and meditate. And there they see that he

who spoke of an immortal being in tones of confidence almost precluding any doubting thought, himself wonderfully arose. And they know not how to resist the impression, that he who stood forth so gloriously in diviner power, dwelt also in the brightness of holy truth. The spirit of power could not have rested upon any soul, except it were sent of God.

And even the more philosophic believer as he is generally termed, who supposes his faith in immortality is based upon the conviction so irresistible when he considers the life of Jesus, that here was a spirit too divine to die, which all outward change might affect for the moment, but could not destroy, he could not look at the empty sepulchre in vain. From the place of the actual resurrection this joyous faith might be declared perhaps in its greatest power. And there might the joyous inference that all who may receive a like kindred to the Redeemer's spirit shall also tread death beneath their ascending feet, have a new impressiveness to his rejoicing soul.

But we are not disposed at present to discuss with any carefulness the varied and precise modes in which the literal resurrection may suggest the hope, or bring a confirmation, or give an assurance of an immortality of being. We only propose to recognize the general fact, that in some way it may brighten that triumphant thought. We only desire to say, that no pilgrimage of feel-

ing to the tomb to celebrate the resurrection can ever be in vain. Ah ! angels come to speak to us at every season when we devoutly gather there, to tell us in a new power of conviction, " He is not here, but is risen." And as we hear their testimony, the heavy doubts and fears which pressed us down to the earth, are in some degree at least, removed. We gain the joy of a more blessed immortal hope. All the graves in the world appear to be unsealed. The forms we laid there amid dust and decay, rise before our thoughts in an unfading bloom. They are not embalmed in spices and myrrh, as the believing women sought to embalm the Saviour's body. But ah ! they are robed in the garments in which an undying faith arrays them. They are embalmed in the pure and living trust, whose virtue and power are enduring as the love of God whence it springs.

The resurrection of the Lord ! It is not however the confirmations of our own immortality alone, suggested by that event, to which the Apostles turn in adoring gratitude. This was doubtless a present thought. Yet was it equally, we may safely say I think, these more directly spiritual influences flowing from this assurance. It was the power and impulse of that faith, the glory and rapture of the immortal life itself, which entranced their imaginations, and ravished their hearts. This is the thought declared in the text.

And this it is they continually express throughout their writings in tones of deep and fervent eloquence.

I do not agree to the implication so often to be detected in earnest, glowing statements of the blessedness of an immortal hope, that everything having a truly inspiring influence to quicken the heart, is derived from the consideration of its immortality. It is a joyfulness, yes, a thought abounding in reasons for gratitude, and motives of holy power, when carefully considered, that we may live even in this present life. This present existence alone, is beautiful. What a theatre of action this world may open! How beautiful it is in many aspects! How beautiful it is even to our sense! May the expression be pardoned, yet when we consider that alone, it almost seems at times that infinite love has *toiled* to robe this world in charms, so fair are its thousand scenes delighting the eye. Our present dwelling place is adorned for us with the kindness of a God. And when the heart awakes to perceive the peculiar expression of love in this outward beauty, the impression is complete. Indeed, here is one of the purest proofs of an infinite goodness; a proof to which none can be insensible, and to some a source of intense delight. The fruits needful for man could have grown, had the trees not been so fair. It is a super-abounding kindness which both supplies the want and then pours forth



ceaseless proofs of its presence in the loveliness of its gifts. The consideration sometimes melts the heart, like the remembrance of that grace which sends messengers still to the evil in their ingratitude, as well as to the good. If the law, according to the psalmist's image, goes forth from his chambers as a bridegroom, the earth looks up to welcome him in the loveliness of a bride. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like the flowers she bears upon her bosom. Who might not feel that here alone is reason why man in his gratitude, as it was said of old, should call it good!

How beautiful is this world also to the affections! For notwithstanding all the disappointments coming independently of man's mistake or sin, what gushing fountains of tenderness and joy are always flowing in the heart of parent, or friend, or child, to refresh the broad world alike in its poorest or loftiest homes; flowing freely, impartially, as the light surrounds and cheers all human dwellings. What bonds of love are woven in life's numberless spheres of action, in which it seems almost a heaven to be unfolded! The outward world is beautiful enough to waken the soul to praise. Yet no beauty is there like the gladness beaming over the face of the child in its glee, to the mother's heart. No scene of existence can be called a wilderness, when fountains like these are springing up by the side of all men's

paths ; when they are flowing in all their sweetness, perhaps in chiefest purity, in scenes shaded and humble in the view of the foolish world, as nature's poorest streams may be in the secluded places man seldom enters. •

And yet once more, how beautiful is this world merely as a sphere of thought, for impulses in whatsoever man deems great and noble ! What worlds are opened to us here in all grand discovery, which pierces into the earth, only to find new treasures of knowledge, and looks up to the heavens, only to see still grander systems ! What noble thoughts are enkindled, when, the more wide or the more minute its observation, it equally perceives new proofs of the majesty and the tenderness of a God ! What a bright and continually increasing inheritance is transmitted in the wisdom of all preceding generations ; generations in which wise men have lived, and prophets spoken, and seers of God declared their visions ! Reflection often prompts the heart to ask indeed, why should man's life here be so brief, when such unexhausted and inexhaustible sources of instruction are spread abroad on every hand ? Here alone might be enough to inspire and to charm through the utmost length of a patriarch's day. What revelations of the Father then are *here* to delight the soul, in the beauty blessing the eye, in the joyous affections within the heart, in the thoughts of truth quickening whatsoever is noble

in the human breast ! It may indeed be a joy to live.

It is not the idea of immortality alone which may impart inspiration to the human heart. Nor is it by depreciating present existence man obtains the brightest conception of the value of an immortal hope. Far otherwise. When this world is magnified, when all its charms are made to pass before us, we begin to gain some worthy conception of a more exalted life. Then do we understand the full power of the exhortation in the text and kindred declarations. This world is only the cradle of the undying soul. Here, it is only infancy. When I see most clearly the angels of love and mercy now watching over us, when I see how much of joyfulness may be in man's present life, notwithstanding the wreck of so many hopes, when I perceive the host of bright instructions and holy impulses gathered around him, although in some things the limits to his view appear so narrow,—when I survey these blessings of his infancy, I am most prepared to predict the glory of his manhood. These scenes of outward beauty so unspeakably fair ! They image that higher beauty no man can see and live. They are bright hints of what is waiting to be revealed, when the veil now concealing so much of this vast temple of God shall be forever rent. These joyous affections gladdening all human hearts, blessing earth's countless homes !

They intimate something respecting the bliss of a more perfect love in a world where there can be no more separations. These inspiring truths now unfolded to man's earnest thought ! They dimly suggest the brightness of that world of unfading and perfect light, where the soul may ascend forever toward the sublimest heights of glory and of God. If these swaddling clothes wherein we are wrapped in present existence are such robes of beauty, if this manger-cradle where we are laid possess charms so great, what may be this yet fairer robe ? What can be that still more glorious dwelling place ?

“ If God hath made this world so fair,  
Where sin and death abound,  
How beautiful beyond compare,  
Will paradise be found ! ”

Our present existence is a prophecy. It stands pointing onward to a bright fulfilment, as the dim revelations of God in the elder world prophesied more perfect disclosures of his truth and love in a later time. And the more clear and beautiful the prophecy, the more distinctly can we perceive the glory it heralds. Present life is like the morning. And in the greater clearness of the light when it first streams upward in the east, can I find the best assurance of the brightness of the future day. Ah ! these analogies whisper the most delightful hopes. We argue from the

bright present, to the infinite unknown. If a home for our fleeting, present day, have such an exhaustless wealth of beauty and instruction, what treasures may there be in the temple eternal in the heavens !

Thus also do we gain a glimpse of the spiritual greatness possible in the future. There are dark stains still upon all human robes. There are occasional fears, possibly, occasional murmurings, in most trusting human hearts. There are tears we fail to wipe away by a serene faith in God. There are toils that seem heavy, though we may be striving to assume the light and easy yoke by glad reconciliation to an appointed work. Yet may there come glorious intervals of peace, seasons of clear shining in the heart, hours when through the parted clouds we gaze directly upon the heaven. There are bright earnestings of a glorious inheritance in many a visiting of inward joy, in many a moment of peace, in the confidence of prayer. And ah ! if here, when the breathings of grace first visit the soul such peace may be, what may come in its full and perfect influence ? Dost thou wonder at the apostle's glorious hope when he says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, the things God hath prepared for them that love him."

Meditations like these may best unfold the glory of an immortal hope. Meditations like these lead us most directly to the thought I sup-

pose was always prominent in those apostolic minds, when they discoursed concerning the Redeemer's resurrection. This vision of a more perfect existence, which that event suggested and confirmed, glowed before their minds as they meditated. This hope that the soul might be raised above all the limitations of its infancy, enkindled their enthusiasm. This made them speak of that resurrection of the Son of God, its most perfect symbol, and in so many ways its blest assurance, in words of rapture. In this thought lies the meaning of their exhortations when they pleaded with those who were risen with Christ, who rejoiced in the hope his resurrection confirmed, to seek those things which were above, to live worthily of a calling so altogether divine. And well might they plead in fervent tones, and speak in words of rapture. If it be a joy to live even in this present existence, if even here is a world God might pronounce to be good, filled with impulses to noble thought, with fountains of pure enjoyment, what may it be to be raised into heavenly places with the Lord? Man may not say. He can only exclaim in the tremblings of his joyous hope, "now are we the sons of God, and we know not what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

The glory of the Christian doctrine of immortality is not in suggesting the idea of duration

merely in our existence. It is not that, although it bring the great assurance, that while the sun of all being himself continues to be, the light he has kindled in the soul of man shall never be extinguished. Its real glory is in unfolding this conception of a possible perfection of being, which everything of beauty or glory here can only dimly shadow forth to the believing heart. Its office is *not* to make us soar away in fancy to scenes in the future, pictured in surpassing brightness through any oversight of the rich signatures of God's present love. Its true office always is to elevate present existence, by pointing to the bright earnestness here of the transcendent inheritance for which we hope. Nay, Jesus speaks of a resurrection *now* to be obtained and enjoyed, before we are called to tread the valley of the shadow of death. The eternal life of which he discourses may now be entered. The mere idea of duration, the simple thought of a continuance of existence beyond the grave, often seems almost lost in the sublime words he uses concerning that condition whereby man may now be already passed from death unto life. And as in one place he speaks of himself as the Son of man who was then in heaven, so does he represent all believers inwardly united to himself, as already possessing the resurrection life. It is a spiritual condition which glows in his soul in his sublimest words upon this noblest theme; a condition which brings a con-

tinuance of existence in a more glorious being as a simple and unfailing result. It is a life which *cannot* die. To be raised with Christ indeed, is thus to seek those things which are above. It is to have immortal thoughts ennobling continually all present scenes. It is to dwell in a constant communion with those holy truths which were gushing forever from the living well in the Saviour's bosom. It is to have an immortal love flowing into and purifying present affections; deepening every generous feeling until it become like the pure affections in that lowly, and only truly risen one. It is the gradual transfiguration of this earthly life, until the body obtain a kind of spiritual glory, because it becomes a willing servant of the soul, and the law of the members warring against the law of the mind, has partially ceased to reign. Ah no! the glory of the christian idea of immortality is not in the thought of the duration of existence. That is not worthy of itself to awaken the enthusiasm of the soul. It is this spiritual greatness, which it would now begin to manifest in the world, as Jesus was once adorned with a celestial brightness to the disciples' eyes. God manifested in the flesh! This is the christian idea of the "eternal life." This is its symbol, its hope, its aim, and its end.

The world celebrates the Redeemer's resurrection. It goes to the deserted tomb, to swell the anthem of triumph because the grave hath lost its



victory, and death hath been deprived of its sting. It is good to meditate upon the outward and wondrous fact. It is good to meditate there with a lowly heart, although it be with a benighted thought. But we would that believers might always remember what is the worthy end of all such meditations, and what is the truest celebration of the Lord's resurrection. The festival is kept, when they come not alone in gratitude for a ransom from the power of death, but for the idea of an absolute regeneration they may therefore hope to realize in the progress of their being. The festival is kept, when the consoling hand of the doctrine it impresses is not only wiping away the tears of bereavement from weeping eyes, but when its sanctifying influence is transforming human hearts. The festival is kept, as humanity is raised from the power and the woe of the second death, and ascends into heavenly places in its thought, and feeling, and prayer. Saviour ! who art the true resurrection and the life, as well as the ransomer from the grave and its gloom, come to us in power, until we may keep that festival in newness of life ! Come, until we may keep it in that spirit which only hath immortality, because it is " the life of God in the soul of man."

## Present Experience of Immortal Life.

JOHN xi : 25, 26. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die."

It is scarcely possible for the believing mind to read the record of the conversation of Jesus with the mourning sisters, and of the scene at the grave of Lazarus, without an increasing faith, and a profounder reverence. The subject of the history is one of overwhelming wonder. But the entire narration is pervaded by a beautiful simplicity, an indescribable, but all-convincing naturalness of expression, which is its own all-sufficient witness. Nature speaks in every line ; and simply to read, is almost to believe. No where is the pure simplicity of nature more clearly manifest, to strengthen faith ; and no where is the position of Jesus more majestic, to deeper reverence. He was communing with a grief that touched the springs of sympathy in his own breast, so that Jesus wept. He stood at the grave of friendship. The tomb had completed its conquest. And a stone was laid upon the cave where the body was buried. And there, in the direct presence of death in its apparent victory, amid all the circum-

stances that could combine to give them impressiveness, he uttered these words of calm majesty. There, he uttered that declaration of triumph, which destroyed the power of the grave for ever, in that serene tone which even now seems to fall upon the ear as we meditate, attesting the presence of the Son of God.

But the text is not only impressive, in its special connection with the circumstances of the hour when its Gospel first gladdened human hearts. It implies one of the noblest thoughts of the great Christian faith. It not only declares a resurrection, in words of serene assurance. It intimates the possibility of an inward, present experience of an immortal life. It implies, that holiness of life brings with it bright convictions of man's immortality, growing more radiant and clear at every step of spiritual progress; so that, as we advance towards the life of Jesus, we shall know by an inward witness, that the living soul can never die. We turn in gladness, to contemplate the possibility of that blest experience. We desire for the moment to listen to the tones of that inward witness, which must testify of an immortal hope to the faithful heart, amid all the apparent victories of the grave; which may give to the lowly soul, a babe in knowledge, but a true child of God, an assurance as clear, as if the splendors of the coming world had broken upon its view.

It is a self-evident proposition, that a true obe-

dience to the laws of our being, with the soul as with the body, must open to view our nature and our destiny. Every creature of God, as all science continually proves, has a law inscribed upon the constitution of its being, it was made to fulfil. And every circumstance attending its existence, every minutest influence which may affect its life, only tends to the fulfilment of that divinely appointed destiny. The trusting heart declares this, at its instantaneous inference from its faith in God. And every advance in our knowledge confirms it, bringing new demonstrations of its truth. And the soul may rightfully accept it, as the sign of an everlasting covenant between God and man, his crowning work, his darling child. Indeed, could we once read the laws of our being through a lowly and true obedience, could these capacities for undying affections, for unlimited advancement, thus begin to unfold themselves in some true, though faint glimpses of their majesty, we should feel that no coming flood, no apparent destruction can sweep us away, with those laws in one tittle unfulfilled. But always, when the deluge comes, some ark shall be provided to bear us safely on the very bosom of the flood, to the eternal Mount of God.

We bear a strangely mingled being, in this union between the flesh and spirit. This undying soul, whose light as holy men affirm, remains while the Throne of God endureth, is married to

the day for a season, where the elements of destruction begin their work even in the cradle of the babe. And the life of the flesh is first developed. It becomes so absorbing, that oftentimes the spiritual life is overshadowed, and almost destroyed. These bodies, made to transmit all quickening influences to the soul, the splendors of God's love in nature, for instance, through the eye, and the intimations of his grace and truth through every sense, waking the heart to new perceptions of his eternal goodness, these bodies may become the spirit's tomb. The very God in man sometimes appears to serve the heart, toiling to invent new indulgencies to please its vitiated tastes. And how shall we realize then the existence of any nature more divine? As well may we expect to convey to the mouldering body, a perception of this life amidst an outward world of beauty, as to give the dead soul a living conviction of its own immortality. But could that soul within us speak, could it unseal the tomb wherein we have laid it and live, coming forth in a power before which the passions that would keep it buried become as dead men, then its own true life must of necessity reveal its nobler nature, and its glorious end. Then the law God made it to fulfil, will appear in distinct and shining characters. Let it once stand in the fidelity that scorns the kingdoms of the world, if only to be gained by the least departure from the simple

truth, let it once stand in that fervour of prayer which flies to God as the bird to its nest, and its undying life shall be known. Every endeavor to unfold its deep affections, brings another proof of an infinite capacity, which only God himself can fill. Each step in spiritual progress, brings a new conviction that we were made to live in a spiritual world, in our higher nature, truly as the body was made for present life. Then shall we know that "man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word proceeding from the mouth of God." Then shall each advance towards our abiding rest in the Father's bosom, enable us more distinctly to see the glory we had with Him, in His eternal purposes of love. That great doctrine shall here also be verified; "whosoever doeth the will, shall know of the doctrine." From this mountain height, we may see even now the land of promise. The true faith will come in every burning thought, in every living feeling; the bright faith, that surely as the plant was made to bring forth fruit, each after its kind, by the law of its creation, the soul of man was made to bloom forever in the Paradise of God.

We often fail to apprehend the thought in the mind of Jesus when he spoke of the resurrection, and of eternal life, and thus overlook one important part of the teaching. Those words chiefly suggest to *us* the idea of particular events in our future being. They expressed rather, to him, a

state of the heart ; that life of God in the soul of man, which must bring a conviction of immortality as its natural consequence. It is with this doctrine in his teaching, as when he speaks of man's salvation. He does not discourse particularly concerning salvation in future worlds. He speaks of a present purification of the human heart ; a redemption now, of which future salvation is a sure and majestic result. We apply the phrase, "eternal life," to something which shall be known after the change of death. He thought of the purified and living heart, dwelling now in immortal thoughts, and divine affections, drawing its life from "Siloa's brook, that flows fast by the oracles of God." He thought of a state of the soul which naturally triumphed over eternal change ; a state where the deep affections, fixed upon God, must remain greatly undisturbed amidst outward vicissitudes, as the ocean deeps are all serene, while the surface is tossed by the passing storm. He saw a state of mind to which there would be no more death, in the too frequent sense of that word ; a state where a secret persuasion must be always present, that this, like all outward events beside, was only a change to a deeper life. There is no other explanation of the peculiar form of expression in the text, and all kindred declarations. He represents the resurrection and the life, as actually experienced then. The true resurrection was then known in his own

experience. It will be known on this side the grave, by all who know his mind, through a true obedience to the law of their immortal being. And this accounts also for the fact so often observed, and sometimes observed with wonder, that Jesus does not attempt to prove the doctrine of immortality, as we generally use that expression. He endeavors to awaken to the consciousness of an immortal soul, rather than to present any argument for its immortality. These arguments for an immortality of being avail but little, while the soul knows nothing of an eternal life. Jesus calls us directly to that spiritual resurrection, which must lead us to look upon death and the grave, as they appeared to him; having no victory and no sting for the living soul. Only one thing was chiefly important, that men should come forth from the graves of sin; and then the spirit of truth living within their hearts, that blessed comforter leading into all truth, would whisper a blest assurance in all their questionings.

And here I see the process whereby Jesus brings life and immortality truly to light, in the living convictions of the heart. He declares the wondrous truth indeed in his word, and upon that simple assurance the trusting disciple rests, when nothing more may be seen. But when we regard Jesus as the one divinely given example of the life of the soul, we perceive how the great doctrine may become clear to the actual conscious-



ness of the human heart. We see how humanity may be lifted above all the shades in the valley of the shadow of death, in its habitual life. The idea of existence beyond the grave hath always been present, in some degree, to the mind of the race. It has often been indeed, only as a flickering ray of hope in sorrows night, yet has it fallen, a light, never perhaps to be utterly extinguished, upon all the graves where the human heart hath laid the idols of its love. But it could not practically change the face of death, in the habitual feeling of man. Death was the king of terrors still. It was an angel of destruction, as alas, it is to multitudes now, although surrounded by a holier light, and not an angel of mercy, taking all the children of the race in his arms, to bear them into a more exalted being, nearer still to the Father's throne. But the victory of the grave is past, when we may look up to Jesus, in his godlike purity, as the true example of the spirit's life. In that divine humanity, life and immortality are indeed brought to light. We see the soul once, entering upon a true spiritual resurrection; proving itself to be a partaker of the divine nature, and therefore of necessity a sharer in its endless life. The whole creation groaned for one such manifestation. The world had not seen it. No man could have seen it, in the gropings of his ignorance, in the thick gloom of that cloud of sin, shrouding more or less, every child

of the race. But in the light from the life of the sinless one, the truth is plain. That wonderful life, so divine and pure that he seems my God, I perceive as I meditate to be my brother too, according to his own blessed word. And I believe, that his last wonderful prayer, declares the destiny and end of our spiritual being; the prayer wherein he asks, "that they who believe may all be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, and be with me where I am." Is not that a Gospel of great joy to blinded, crushed human nature, in whose coming the heavens must be glad? And will not its almost inconceivable revelations of life and love, become the familiar thought, as the sympathy with the soul of Jesus becomes deep and living? All the countenances of men are instantly changed by its teaching. They are not children of the dust, but children of God. They have prodigally wandered indeed, until they may be feeding with the swine in their sensuality. A true heart would willingly be crucified to obtain their deliverance from a perdition so great. Yet may they return, in the deep love to which many sins shall be forgiven, to enter upon an enduring fellowship with the Redeemer's life. Morning breaks upon the tomb when such a revelation comes; a morning to which no night shall succeed. "Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The world is often asking with a trembling heart, for bright proofs of this doctrine of the soul's immortality. We need them sadly, to confirm our often wavering, and almost vanishing faith. Perhaps we may not think so, but the proofs which practically sustain the soul, are found in whatsoever may bring us into living union with the soul of Jesus. Nothing else can write the truth upon the spirit's consciousness, that it may become an ever-present light, amidst the decays and deaths of time. Every victory over besetting passions, every hour when we break another chain of sin, brings a new and living witness, to help us to realize the possibility of a destiny so divine. Indeed, although it may appear, and is, a sentiment too vague to be named as any reliance for the heart, in connection with confirmations like these, yet everything which deeply moves the spirit *tends* I think, to waken some consciousness of an immortal life within. The majesty of nature in its scenes of grandeur, or of tumult, calls forth the conviction of something in the breast, more majestic far than they; a power of thought and life, which takes up the isles as a very little thing. The great works of genius remaining unharmed through revolutions of centuries and empires, whisper of the greater mind which fashioned them, whose life must be more enduring still. And the appreciating heart, while it gazes, feels the assurance of its own re-

lationship to that exalted, and enduring mind. These, and many ministries beside, awaken thoughts that transcend the bounds of time, and wander through eternity.

But we turn from these things, to meditate again upon the more perfect assurance. Would you gain that bright assurance? Dwell in the deep life of lowly prayer, till your intimate relationship to God becomes a fixed and present thought. Live in that immutability of principle, which treads the world's enticements and frowns beneath its feet. The practical assurance of an immortal hope, their proof in the life of the believing heart. It may be manifest to babes, who know nothing of human wisdom, but are humbly dwelling in the Redeemer's love. It is perceived anew, in every increase of fervent feeling. It is seen again, in every manifestation of the power of the living soul, in the lives of those around us. And God has blessed the world with such confirmations of the truth. They are found in that sweet, unshaken spirit of trust, which triumphs more perfectly in the greater wastings of disease, which clothes the face with a heavenly beauty, as it loses its earthly bloom; which makes the decays of nature, seem only as a gradual, and bright ascension. They are found in all histories of holy men who have kept the faith; in those who were ready to be offered up, and could glory in their martyrdom. And when we commune

with this cloud of witnesses, receiving something of their spirit, when we commune especially with him, from whom they, and we alike, receive our truest inspiration, we can look up from the grave, where we have laid child or friend in the strong agony of human love, with weeping eyes, but unfaltering trust. Then can we say, "He is not here, but is risen; and hath ascended to his Father, and our Father; to his God, and our God."

It is good to meditate upon this inward assurance, growing ever more clear and bright, as the spirit of the Lord of glory regenerates the soul. But the question arises amidst such meditations, is there no bright assurance for men, while still in a comparatively imperfect life? We cannot look, say numberless throbbing hearts, we cannot look with this pure spiritual eye directly into the spiritual world. Is there nothing that may place our feet upon a rock, the waves of change cannot overwhelm? Thanks be forever given, there is. God speaks to our spiritual infancy, imparting the instructions our infant weakness may need. The simple declarations of the Redeemer's lips, the word of him who was clothed in the majesty of wisdom and of miracle, this ministry comes to the yet undeveloped soul, like the words of a parent in whom we implicitly trust. Here the trusting soul may rest, although the inward witness hath not clearly spoken yet. Nay, this reliance often-

times may be the first impulse to spiritual life, whose confirmations of the truth are so clear and precious. This may be the basis whereon it rests. Yet blessed as may be its work, indispensable as may be its presence, to give stability to faith, we only state the conviction of all believing hearts in saying, its true office is only to quicken this spiritual life we have been contemplating. It is comparatively valueless and vain, when it stands alone, not leading to the life which causes us to know of the doctrine. And therefore it is, that no processes of argument alone, no merely outward reliance, no bare faith in the fact that the Redeemer rose, ever brought a confidence that could stand unshaken, when the rushing tides of grief were beating upon it. This is indispensable, as a foundation for a better life, which may give a better hope. But this alone, is futile; vanishing into air, in the hour of greatest need.

It is not difficult to see why our immortal hopes are so faint and dim. It is easy to see why immortality is so like a dream; and heaven almost as an empty name. It is not strange our faith should totter under the first blows of actual calamity, and have no power to wipe away these gushing tears. No mere study of the record of the Redeemer's life alone, until his resurrection seems as sure as any event related in the annals of the past, will fully remove the difficulty. The evil is deeper far. The soul hath not lived in a spirit-

ual life, until spiritual truths, affections, joys, have become great realities in its view; and the existence of a spiritual world been thus attested in its sure experience. The mortal hath not put on immortality, so that in a practical and abiding conviction, death should appear to be swallowed up in victory. It is said in the description of a purely spiritual life, "And there shall be no more death." It is a state which knows neither age, nor decay. The wise heart seeks at once this all-triumphant spirit. It goes in its blindness to seek a truly spiritual resurrection, by communion with the life of the Son of God. For it remembers the word which says, "Whosoever *liveth*, and believeth in me shall never die."

## Immortality of the Human Heart.

**JOHN, xx : 16.** "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master."

THE text informs us how Jesus made himself known to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection, while she stood weeping by the deserted sepulchre, saying amidst her tears, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Jesus himself came near unobserved, and addressed her. But she was still partly turned towards the tomb, gazing there in grief and wonder, and she did not instantly recognise the Lord. Jesus then repeated the simple name, Mary. And by that one word, spoken in the same tone of affection which had often greeted her ear from the lips of the living Jesus, the whole amazing and enrapturing secret was told. And she turned, prostrating herself to embrace his feet in an intensity of joy that could only exclaim, Rabboni, which is to say, Master.

In observing the simple accounts of the Redeemer's resurrection as they stand in the record, I see not how one can fail to be profoundly impressed with the beautiful, the perfect harmony between the character manifest in the appearances of the risen Lord, and everything in his previous



history. Those appearances are few, and most briefly told. But there is a wonderful, an indescribable naturalness in them all we instantly recognize; something it seems impossible to conceive that any art of man could imitate. In each particular word the same pure spirit of tenderness and love breaks upon us in sweetest manifestations, with the clearness of the sunbeam suddenly lighting up the thickly clouded sky. He speaks to Mary as the text informs us. And the same beautiful, unutterable personal tenderness of the Redeemer's soul whose remembrance made her linger by the cross, and come early to the tomb to embalm his body with spices and with tears, the same spirit she had loved before, revealed itself again to her view. He appears to Peter, denying, but repenting Peter, so fallen, and yet so true; whom one glance of grieved love melted to the bitterness of contrition. And how wondrously were the reproofs of the strict teacher, and the compassionateness of the Son of God united as we ever see them, in the question thrice repeated, "Simon, lovest thou me"—that the erring disciple might abate his self confidence and affirm his love, as oft as he uttered his denial. He broke bread in the presence of the two disciples who walked with him to Emmaus, as he had often broken it before. And how much is told in the simple declaration that he was instantly "known to them" "in the breaking of bread."

He comes to the disciples when gathered together, to give them their commission. And then the heart which folded Samaritans in its embrace of love, seeing God's children everywhere, only said, "Go into *all* the world, telling the gospel to *every* creature." But we need no further specification. Indeed the singular perfectness of this harmony of spirit is not to be described. It is rather to be *felt*, as we read and meditate. And then we see each declaration of the risen Lord is only another pulsation of the same heart of love. His countenance wears the same expression it wore before the stillness of the tomb settled upon the features. The chill of the grave has not caused one deep personal affection to lose any portion of its glow. Death has come and passed; death, in all its agony, lingering, torturing crucifixion. Yet it left no trace of its power behind it. It was only a momentary ripple upon the serenest sea. The once living, and the now risen Jesus! Ah, so identical is the spirit we see in these separate manifestations, that one would think only the narrow limits of a night, between two days of the same life divided them, instead of that broad gulf, as men so often term it, the appalling grave. The same garment covers the earthly and the risen life of the blest Redeemer. And it is a coat without a seam. Death doth indeed seem to be abolished, when the same life reappears to greet me from beyond the tomb. Where then could be

the *sting* of death? where the *victory* of the grave?

The same Jesus that lived, and loved, and suffered, *returns*. He bears the impress of the same heart once so sweetly manifest, as his hands and his side bore the marks of the nails and the spear. This thought suggests one attractive conception of the spiritual world it is a delight to cherish. Let us gain a glimpse of some of its hopes.

One tendency often manifest in human speculation, is to suppose the future life too greatly different from present being. Men sometimes look in their imagination to that other, and now hidden land, where the believing rest in the bosom of faith, as if a wide chasm did indeed yawn between our condition of life and theirs, over which the very characteristics of humanity itself cannot be expected to pass. So different are the two worlds in many men's conception, we might almost imagine a voice had been heard from thence, to say, "none of the elements of life in this higher being can cross to the earthly world, to be manifested there." And nought from thence can come hither, to endure and shine amid the more spiritual glories of the heavens. Instead of regarding the passage into those unknown scenes as a mere transition in the life, it seems to become a real creation.

Another fancy sometimes appears we know. Sometimes the future is not deemed too different

from present life, but as too much resembling present being. It is not a conception too greatly resembling it, we might say in strictness of speech, when we think of the *nobler* elements of present life. But it resembles too nearly the merely outward, one could almost say, earthly portion of existence here. It is a heaven, consisting greatly in outward splendours, that gleams before the imagination of some as they meditate. The golden streets and the glittering crowns of the New Jerusalem seem to be deemed essential parts of its glorious life. Heaven becomes an intensity of outward delight such as the world can never give; as if any *outward* beauty could make an Eden for the soul of man; as if what cannot still or soothe its longings here, though the whole world be gained, could become its *rest* in a more exalted being. Amidst all these gifts, in the undying thirst of the soul, even now men may be heard crying for water to cool their burning tongues. What are they to satisfy the infinite desire of a nature, only the infinite love of God can soothe to an abiding peace? Men sometimes carry the senses across the river of death in their imaginations. But this is a mistake too gross to continue long beneath the pure light of a spiritual faith. The more frequent mistakes, at least the more difficult error to escape, consists in supposing the heart with all its peculiar affections will in some way be left behind, as the soul

crosses that mysterious flood. There is a conception of the future world which is too abstractly spiritual; which seems to annihilate the sweet affections of human nature itself, those which are throbbing in every movement, and exerting an omnipresent influence in every scene of earthly being. Not only does the bodily frame moulder away in the recesses of the grave, but all personal affections, the filial tenderness, the deep attachments of friendship, the unions of the heart, all those wreaths of blessed feeling that crown existence with beauty, are sometimes supposed to slumber there forever. They are all the mere attendants of an earthy life. And when the spirit rises, they are left behind it, as the risen Lord left the grave clothes wherein men had wrapped the body, lying in the sepulchre. All personal remembrances are outgrown in that impersonal, that purely spiritual being. The love of God absorbs all possible affections beside, till the memory, and the desire of all relationships the soul hath known before shall pass away, as the toys of infancy are left when we become men.

Nay more than this. There have been those who unfolded this thought as the true law of *present* life. Men have said it was an imperfection and a weakness to indulge the peculiar tendernesses of earthly homes, and not to spread them out with equal fervor towards all members of the great family of God. They forgot that in all

bosoms alike these peculiar home affections are nestling, so that each alike is folded in their joyful embrace. Ah, the human heart, once wakened to love, may safely be trusted to sweep away all speculations like these. But we only refer to them now to say they are not to be swept away, they are right, if the future be that state of impersonal feeling some have imagined it. The single aim of earthly existence should be to bring the law of the more spiritual life awaiting us, to a true dominion now. Man should make the earth an image of the heavens. If filial tenderness, and the glow of peculiar friendships do not live in that life of the resurrection, begin now to separate them from your breast. Rend the sweet bonds which make home a place of peculiar joyfulness. Crucify these deep personal affections. Hear the great law in this application of its dread commandment, "If thy right eye offend, pluck it out and cast it from thee. Whatever else may be doubtful, it is a sin we know to *cherish* the weaknesses which the very entrance into a truly spiritual being shall separate from us forever, as we suppose the soul will then be separated from these mortal forms.

A better doctrine is imaged to my thought when I read the record of the Redeemer's resurrection. The *man* Christ Jesus rose, when the Son of God burst the gates of the tomb. Instead of supposing this cold impersonal spirit is to become the law of

present life, these particular affections are living still, we apprehend, in future being. Not in their undue, and frequently unbalanced action, will they survive. But in their essential nature they seem to be indestructible elements of the enduring soul. The tenderness which once spoke to Mary when she annointed the Redeemer's feet, and washed them with tears, in the fulness of her penitence, spoke to her still through his immortal lips with an equal fervor. The disciples would not have known the Lord, had he no peculiar affection still for those who had circled around him in such devotedness. They would not have known the Lord, had he no peculiar word for John the beloved, for the friends he had chosen. No marks of the crucifixion suffering could have assured them, when the peculiar features of the soul were seen no more. It is *humanity* that rises, the friendship, the affection, the sympathies, all these purer feelings which constitute the charm of humanity itself. It is humanity that rises, we say again, not humanity dispossessed of its very heart, but only we apprehend with that same heart, loving more fondly, yearning more tenderly over all who were linked with itself in the days of its earthly existence. These things do not die. They are strengthened rather, and forever glorified.

Jesus, ascending from the sepulchre, is the same being who was crucified and slain ! Indeed we

cherish the thought that we shall never know the power of these personal relationships, until we enter the life of the resurrection. We look to a more spiritual being as the state wherein that pure and transcending love of God may enter the heart, which eye hath not seen, which all present experience only intimates. But this pure love of God ! It is no impersonal affection, never yearning over particular souls. How greatly we mistake in supposing there can be any such war in heaven, any clashing between tendencies in our nature alike indestructible. It is a blessed word in Christianity, "That he who loveth God, should love his brother also." The affection which flows to individual souls, is the only, and the natural manifestation of this inward fountain. And if the central life be mighty, these streams of necessity must be deep and strong. Here is a law which must have dominion forevermore.

•  
 " Ah ! this is the bliss of the mansions above,  
 To stand near the throne, as the *angels* of love."

The peculiar affections of humanity will be purified from their earthliness we are sure, when they become only outpourings of the central love of God. They will be free from the selfishness which now more or less attaches to them all, polluting what seem the most disinterested sympathies of the world by its touch. But all this will



only bring forth the true feelings themselves in an intensity unknown before. Indeed the very glory of this deep, this wondrous love of God for which we hope, is manifested by entering the ten thousand particular ministries of blessing the peculiar pleadings of the heart may suggest, or the Father's kindness allow. Souls may enter new relationships of feeling, we know not how many, or how oft, in their ascending life. Yet these shall only increase their capacity of love at every step of the progress, enabling them to embrace those they cherished before with greater fervour, for every new tie they form. A thousand of the transient bonds, the unions, as they are called, of the world, may then pass away, as they are fast passing now. But those which are real and true, and therefore eternal, shall shine like the stars forever and ever.

The risen and the once incarnate Jesus are one. The grave is the place of decay for all that is merely sensual of course. Nothing more can it destroy. The change of death is not like the fabled river of Léthe, where the soul drinks the waters of entire forgetfulness, erasing from its memory all the feelings and relationships of the past. The transient is only swept away, that every thing beside may shine the more. When we consider it for a moment we say in passing, our theme presents suggestions of fearful admonition, as well as thoughts of joy. The same Jesus

arose his disciples had loved on earth., Death takes away no blessed sympathy in which humanity rejoices, neither does it imbue us with any new fountains of life. No new expression rested upon the Redeemer's countenance which it had never worn before, when he came from the grave to look again upon the little band of his devoted followers. What *had been*, appeared again. Death does not destroy. Neither does it create. There is no warmth in the chilling grave to cause plants of righteousness to grow, which have never begun to live before. There is no magic in its action to change the garments stained by earthliness and sensuality, into pure and spotless robes. Let the world in its vain imaginations remember that a mere *transition* into another state of being, cannot be a regeneration. The streams of spiritual joy in numberless souls in a more spiritual world. Here on the earth did they take their rise, in the mountain-heights ascended by a self-denying virtue, where men have gone in true devotion, bearing their cross upon their shoulder. From thence were they poured along the pathway of earthly life, often obstructed it may be, yet always flowing. And therefore is it that they now are falling into the sea of pure and crystal love before the throne. But those in whom they were never springing up ! Can the silent Sepulchre have power to save ?

But though we forget not its admonitions, as

well as its solace, though it would be well for us to remember it till we should pray in intensest desire that the fountains of purest life might be opened within us here, yet it is the joyous aspect of our doctrine we desire mainly to impress. The *man* Christ Jesus reappears. All that was lovely here, is seen again. No personal affection, no peculiar compassion is lost. Death is not that mighty change in the very nature of our being, some appear to imagine it. The affections which were the charm of the world, do not cease to live beyond it, and to reign. I meditate upon the great company of the departed. I think sadly of the lost, once clasped to the heart. I go to the grave to hear the Christian faith forever saying, "They are not here; they are risen." And what has risen? Is it the same spirit we knew? The same Jesus arose! There the great truth is imaged. What has risen? All that was true and lovely here in friendship, all that was cheering in the relationships once so dear, all that was generous and affectionate in the heart once enshrined in the mortal frame now decaying. It is not a spirit knowing only an impersonal affection, which can recognize me no more. Rather, as I meditate, does it appear to call me by name, as of old; as Jesus spoke to the weeping Mary at the tomb. What has risen? Not a spirit which loses its peculiar bonds of feeling, or breaks its connection with those remaining still, when this

visible tie is broken. "Jesus liveth," as it is expressively said, "to make intercession for us." The life whose joy it was to pour itself out in ceaseless ministries of mercy, may not cease thus to act, though in ways unseen, when it approaches nearer to the Father of an infinite love. The glowing friendship that would pray and plead on earth, only prays and pleads the more in the risen life. We are not severed from the spiritual world by a gulf as broad as men have often dreamed.

"The saints on earth, and those above,  
But one communion make.

"One family we dwell in him ;  
One church, above, beneath ;  
Though now divided by the stream,  
The narrow stream of death."

What has risen ? Come and see the same Lord you loved re-appearing, if you ask the authority of the Record, or if you look there only to see an image of what Christianity and reason alike suggest as true. Come and see, and fear the grave no more. It is all unsealed. Fear it not as friends go down to its silence. It can bring no shade upon aught which made that friendship dear. Fear it not when it is opening near your own feet, except as sinfulness must and should fear life and death alike ; except as unrest, unreconciliation of heart, which is itself perdition, must fear to carry its worm wherever it may go.

## The Peace of God.

**PHILIPPIANS, iv : 7.** "The peace of God which passeth all understanding."

**PEACE.** There is a state of the heart, naturally produced by the supreme love of God, no other word might perfectly describe. It images that condition of soul, when there is a complete reconciliation of its affections to the will of God. We conceive a spiritual state wherein there could be no more inward strifes, no more rebellions of heart against the commandments, or the providence of the Father. And when these warrings cease, the result must be peace. Whenever the soul, by a sacrifice true in its spirit as that upon Calvary, however lowly its sphere of action may be, has crucified whatsoever within it is alienated from the will of God; whenever the genuine idea of the atonement is realized in any individual heart, this inheritance must come. What relation, except one of peace, could exist between the soul, and that with which it has really been made one in its most inward desire? The fruit of that spirit must be an absolute peace. It is not the peace which results from any motive of fear; from any show of authority in the law we dare not resist, that keeps the heart in stillness, as a captured city may be overawed and kept in peace, by hosts of armed men. It is like that better

peace which comes, when the conqueror has breathed his own spirit into the captured city, binding it to himself by a loving sympathy, until its inhabitants are no more servants, but have become as sons. They are *children* then. The armed hosts are needed no more. The show of authority ceases. The enemy is converted into a brother. He is not only at peace with all he once opposed, but almost ceases to be conscious of any differing will. And thus the soul may have its wishes become so identical with the injunctions of the law of God, as almost to cease to perceive its individual will. At least, it would not be conscious of its existence through any oppositions of heart. And gradually it might learn to say with Jesus, "the words that I *speake*, I speak not of myself. It is the Father that speaketh in me." Our theme relates to the highest form of the divine life in the soul. Its simple consideration demands that we should stand continually in our thought, upon the summits of those mountain heights of holy and exalted love, whose top we may have never actually seen, except for the transient hour, in the most favored seasons of life. Nevertheless, it is good to look upward in lowliness and adoration, to brighten the image within the soul of its enduring rest.

The text is introduced in its connection, as an inference from the words, "Be careful for nothing;" be anxious for nothing, "but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanks-

giving, let your requests be made known unto God." According to the apostle, a true peace flowed from that absolute trust, which is the effect of a perfect love. It is the opened flower springing from that root of life. When the child on earth places his hand confidently within that of the parent, there is an entire trust in the heart, that casteth out its fears. He walks amid the darkness with no thought of gloom. And thus when man can once place his hand in that of the guiding providence, to follow its teachings in a kindred trust, there begins within his breast the true peace of God. And precisely as he can deliver himself from all selfish anxieties, it will bloom in its beauty in his soul. When they are stilled by some commanding voice, or when the heart is drawn away for a season from their agitations, the bright vision unfolds itself as a substantial reality in our rejoicing breasts. When the spirit of Jesus comes to say to the winds and the sea, "peace be still," there is at once a holy calm.

The transient visitings of this rest, man is at times permitted to see, come in confirmation of this account of its origin. It is true to the experience of every deeply tried heart perhaps, that some hours of wonderful calmness are known, even amid the keenest feeling of its trial. They come, like the deliverance of the disciples tossed in the midst of the sea of Galilee. Immediately, when Jesus entered the ship, it was at the land whither they went. And an inward composure

occasionally appears almost as suddenly, in the intervals amid the hours of deepest agitation, in the saddest experiences of life. It is because a mighty trial often most effectually stills every anxiety, that such intervals of composure as we say, strangely come. How surely these deeper experiences silence for the time the whole crowd of smaller anxieties and fears, often disturbing the whole of ordinary life! Then their clamor can no more be heard. We are taken as by force, into a sphere of thought they cannot enter. The busy world, whose every pulse we have hitherto felt in every vein, lies then before the mind, as the great city before the eye, when the Sabbath has brought a stillness over all its bustle and confusion, and every hammer sleeps by the side of the work it has been framing. We are left alone with a towering calamity which instantly dispels all thought of our own strength, and brings us in absolute dependence unto God. The friend, the child, stands on the brink of the grave, or is laid within it. We cannot but cry unto God. Even Atheism then must pray. We go in sincerity to the Father's throne. And when we ask *thus*, we must always receive. The greatness of the trial, showing our own nothingness, leads to that absolute trust, whose fruit is peace. We may have wondered, possibly, to hear Jesus speak of his peace, in the last conversation with the disciples, when the cross was directly before him, and he almost felt its cruel nails, and the piercing spear.



Ah ! could any selfish anxieties at any time have disturbed his heart, this would have been the hour when he cast himself most entirely upon God, and therefore found the truest peace. And even the changeless serenity of the Redeemer's breast has a new depth and sweetness, in those hours of most apparent confusion. As he looked upon the disciples then, with an affection that made his own precept of love appear as a new commandment, so he appears to have been most profoundly conscious then of the serene peace of God. The descending of the angel into the garden to strengthen Jesus, only images the thoughts of peace naturally coming in darkest hours, when the heart can say in trust, "thy will be done." Ah ! hence came the peace brave Confessors and noble Martyrs have known in their hours of peril, when they sang in their prisons, or amid the fires of the stake. In the intenser trust the moment inspired, they entered upon the life of the resurrection, before the body crumbled to ashes in the flame, "when the door was shut" upon the world, we are told Jesus appeared after his crucifixion, "standing in the midst of the disciples. And ever when the door of the heart is really closed against the vain anxieties that have disturbed us, he will enter the heart with his gift of peace "Be careful for nothing." And the peace passing all understanding shall keep the mind and heart.

Is it not merciful to lead us to the conviction of

our own inherent weakness, that we may see the foundation of the true peace of the soul? But, alas! it is our imperfection, that this peace of the soul only visits as an occasional angel, apparently miraculously sent, and does not abide within us as a perpetual guest. We fail to stand in this entire dependence in habitual life. And thus the strange phenomenon occurs, so often seen, that the heart may be all agitation in the petty trials of daily life, when in heavy calamity it finds hours of genuine peace. Let the feeling of entire dependence, the parent of an absolute trust, once be lost from the heart, and it sinks like the faithless apostle beneath the wave. So have you seen the lake whose surface was entirely undisturbed, reflecting back in almost its original brightness, the beauty and the hues of heaven. But when one breath of wind passes over it, a breath so gentle that it may scarcely be felt upon the cheek, in the moment you are gazing, all is gone. Thus does the soul lie open to the direct influence of the Father. He is bending over it with a glory, and a smile of love, that to the spiritual eye seems faintly imaged in the fairest scenes of nature's beauty. Let the heart be still. No disturbing breath must trouble even the surface of the deep sea of its deep affections. Let it lie in an absolute repose from its vain anxieties, and the light of God's countenance shall shine down into its profoundest depths. And why, oh why might not this peace become an everlasting

possession? We perceive, and we can obey the law by which it comes. "Grace is with us" forever, according to the apostolic salutation. In what except in the heart lies the want, if the peace passing understanding doth not keep and bless it forevermore?

This inward peace is the fruit of an absolute trust. It belongs not then to that state of mind which clings intensely in hope or love, to any imagined arrangements of providence, either in the present time, or the coming future. It arises only in that entire submission of the will, which greatly ceases to question or to speculate. In the instant when man begins to question the ways of providence, his peace is disturbed. Why doth it remove the young and the innocent, he sometimes asks, and long spare the abandoned sinner, whose presence is pollution and wo? Why do some go in quick repeated bereavements to the grave, and others stand at the same hearthstone in an unbroken circle, through many flying years? Why doth judgment sleep long ages over the oppressions of the earth, and the wail of the injured seem to be uttered in vain? One suggestion of this course of reflection will suffice. Hosts of mysteries crowd around us when we enter it with a strange and fearful aspect. We cannot solve one single problem of that appalling crowd. Clouds and darkness are round about the throne. Cease all such vain speculation. It is the temptation of every living heart to say, my lot is

strange and dark. In other circumstances, how easy would have been the way of life? Ah! blaspheme providence no more, thou short-sighted soul, even by the momentary thought that God hath not placed thee in the best possible position in the broad universe for thy peculiar discipline. In things too minute to be seen by the unassisted eye, as science proves, are multitudes of creatures, not one of whom liveth without the Father. Shall He not much more clothe thee? Every moment of such questionings is a confession of want of trust. Conform thyself, thou complaining heart, to the circumstances around thee, and a perception of their fitness, unperceived before, shall soon banish every doubt. Quicken the spiritual eye by a growing love and trust, and no instrument of art, bringing the wonders of heaven to your view in their surpassing perfection and beauty, could reveal such tokens of the Father's love, as would then be disclosed even in the mysteries filling it before with painful doubtings. We cannot overstate the implicitness of the confidence, this absolute trust implies. It almost fears to indulge any questioning of the mind concerning the ways of God. Or if it pursue such great enquiries, it is rather because it loves in adoring gratitude to trace the Father's ways, than to seek a foundation in its researches for its deep reliance. It trusts, before it enquires. It trusts still, and equally, though no light come to bless its searchings. Doth not God reign, it asks in its firm,

and its joyous hope? And that one supreme, all-comprehending ground of holy confidence, takes up within itself all imaginable specific causes of disquietude and fear, and soothes them to an endless rest. Ah! man may picture to himself bright conceptions of the movements of this holy providence, and of the glorious scenes yet concealed in the bosom of future time. But these are not the foundations whereon he rests his hopes. He may, and how fervently he must sometimes pray for deliverance from present change! I watch for an hour in Gethsemane, and I hear that prayer issuing from the Saviour's lips, in the untold strength of the feeling wakened in his hour of agony. But the spirit of unquestioning submission breathes out sweetly in the prayer. It trusts, though it see no deliverance, or only meet a cross. Calvary cannot reach its joyful confidence. But it ascends the hill of shame and scorn, anxious for nothing save a deeper love, and in that cometh the peace passing all understanding.

The longing heart of man could desire no more assured repose from agitation and disquiet. It is the kingdom of heaven, the peace of God in the human soul. It is the rest that remaineth for the people of God. It may not dwell in the world indeed, without some passing, and possibly some bitter trials, without some dropping tears. Jesus wept. And there was a scene of *agony* in the life of the Son of God. Tears may often fall perhaps, when this confidence is in its infancy, in the

present imperfect life, even though it be all the while surely advancing in the soul. But they fall while the light of divine love is still shining fully upon the heart. They are like showers in nature which only reveal the heavenly bow. The serene peace of holy trust ! It may never bring any thoughtless mirth. It may seem a grave joy. Perchance it may never appear to bring any manifestation of its gladness so great to the eye, as the excited gaiety of some worldly spirit in its most favored season. But it is because the joy is too constant to admit of any occasional excess, too uniform to come with observation, like every true element of the kingdom of God in the soul. The heart wherein it abides, is like a vessel whose contents are always mantling its brim. The least addition will make it overflow. The overflowing may seem indeed very small to the eye. But what a testimony it bears to its perpetual fulness ! The peace of God ! It is an absolute trust as we have said, that leaves the heart as it were passive to the influence from above. And yet it is by no passive state of the soul. It comes, when we stand almost like mere channels, through which the influences of God's spirit may directly flow. But it is also when we most earnestly consent to the dispensations it ordains, and positively embrace the duty or the cross it may assign. No more intense action of the soul can be, than is witnessed in the hour when it puts away every trace of selfish desire, through an

absolute resignation. The manifestation may be quiet as the still small voice. But it is the voice, and the life of God. We sadly mistake in this particular in our superficial judgement, we are awed by the storm. But the same power now moveth by in its mighty sway, when the heavens smile upon the earth, and the earth reflects their glance of love, that in other seasons rideth upon the sounding winds. The chiefest energy of spiritual life *seems* to be in exercise, in the moments of contest with rebelling passions. It is a higher energy that awes them into silence. It is a diviner strength, acting in the hours of the soul's peace, than in its seasons of warfare. Its repose, is the serene strength of God.

It is good to look upward to this perfection of the spiritual life, as well as we may, with eyes so dim. But exalted as it may appear, almost beyond our hope, there is no peace elsewhere. And how divinely come the words of him who gained this perfect victory of love, amid the disquietudes, and the unreconciled affections of the human heart; we look in vain into the countenances of almost all whom the world have revered to find this rest for which the soul is forever longing. Some note of discord disturbs the music of their sweetest words. Some stains are upon all their robes. But one voice is lifted up in the ear of men, which is the pure expression of this divinest life. One countenance has looked on man, wearing the serenity of God. It is a salvation for a world cast into a wilderness of thorns in its fall,

to look there and be healed. And the same atonement must be realized within us all, or we dwell in endless disquiet. We are ever cast into the outer darkness, in a greater or less degree, until we gain that absolute love and trust, which are the true wedding garment for the marriage supper of the Lamb; admitting us to a fellowship with his heart, and a participation in his peace. And why should we not seek it with faith in its coming? It does indeed pass all our understanding. It will not come through any processes of argument concerning the love of God, the understanding may devise, though they are based upon proofs radiant as the sun, and numberless as the stars. It is born in the filial heart. It may be all revealed to babes. It comes through a life of unquestioning love, and simple trust. Crucify whatever opposes God's will, let it ordain what it may; and a trust will come, saying forever in its joyous confidence, that sooner would the heavens be opened for the descent of God's miraculous messengers, than any needed blessing be withheld. It would rest in the sweet assurance that legions of angels would come to save us from any cross, were not that very cross itself the divinest blessing. Let the soul live in this absolute trust, and although the outward blessing be withheld, and the actual crucifixion may not be avoided, the inward power shall never fail to come which brings the peace passing all understanding, according as our day may be.



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and where the outward blessing be without  
and the actual condition may not be avoided  
power shall never fail to come forth  
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